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GREYFRIARS' TOWER, KING'S LYNN

FIVE CENTURIES OF RELIGION

BY

G. G. COULTON

LITT.D. CAMB., HON.D.LITT., DURHAM
HON.LL.D. EDIN., F.B.A., FELLOW OF ST
JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, HONORARY
FELLOW OF ST CATHARINE'S COLLEGE,
CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE MEDIEVAL
ACADEMY OF AMERICA

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GENERAL PREFACE

THERE is only too much truth in the frequent complaint that history, as compared with the physical sciences, is neglected by the modern public. But historians have the remedy in their own hands; choosing problems of equal importance to those of the scientist, and treating them with equal accuracy, they will command equal attention. Those who insist that the proportion of accurately ascertainable facts is smaller in history, and therefore the room for speculation wider, do not thereby establish any essential distinction between truth-seeking in history and truth-seeking in chemistry. The historian, whatever be his subject, is as definitely bound as the chemist "to proclaim certainties as certain, falsehoods as false, and uncertainties as dubious." Those are the words, not of a modern scientist, but of the seventeenth-century monk, Jean Mabillon; they sum up his literary profession of faith. Men will follow us in history as implicitly as they follow the chemist, if only we will form the chemist's habit of marking clearly where our facts end and our inferences begin. Then the public, so far from discouraging our speculations, will most heartily encourage them; for the most positive man of science is always grateful to anyone who, by putting forward a working theory, stimulates farther discussion.

The present series, therefore, appeals directly to that craving for clearer facts which has been bred in these times of storm and stress. No care can save us altogether from error; but, for our own sake and the public's, we have elected to adopt a safeguard dictated by ordinary business common-sense. Whatever errors of fact are pointed out by reviewers or correspondents shall be publicly corrected with the least possible delay. After a year of publication, all copies shall be provided with such an erratum-slip without waiting for the chance of a second edition; and each fresh volume in this series shall contain a full list of the errata noted in its immediate predecessor. After the lapse of a year from the first publication of any volume, and at any time during the ensuing twelve months, any possessor of that

volume who will send a stamped and addressed envelope to the Cambridge University Press, Fetter Lane, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4, shall receive, in due course, a free copy of the errata in that volume. Thus, with the help of our critics, we may reasonably hope to put forward these monographs as roughly representing the most accurate information obtainable under present conditions. Our facts being thus secured, the reader will judge our inferences on their own merits; and something will have been done to dissipate that cloud of suspicion which hangs over too many important chapters in the social and religious history of the Middle Ages.

G. G. C.

February, 1920

PREFACE

MY first duty is to express sincere gratitude to the electors on the Ford Foundation at Oxford, by whose invitation part of this book was delivered in lectures during the Michaelmas term of 1930.

Next, I must warn readers that much in this and the next volume may lend itself to misapprehension unless my Introduction and my concluding pages (596-9) are followed with some care. Only thus will they realize what the author has set out to attempt, and be able to judge how far he has succeeded.

Both volumes will provide rather materials for history than actual historical synthesis; yet it is to be hoped that these materials may be found so ordered and annotated as to enable thoughtful readers to draw their own independent conclusions. This multiplication of documents has been forced upon me, to a great extent, by critics who could not be ignored, and who agreed in the surmise that, however unconsciously, I had tipped the scales by selecting one class of evidence in undue proportion. We shall obviously gain if this question can be raised from that state of mere surmise to something like documentary certitude; and I hope that this and the next volume may show more clearly whether there exist masses of contradictory evidence which I have missed, or whether the fault lies rather in the superficiality with which British scholars of the last fifty years, apart from brilliant exceptions, have studied the actual monastic records. Certainly Dom Ursmer Berlière, whose recent death has been an irreparable loss, published in late years more than one paper which, if it had come from an English Protestant, would have raised an outcry from those who fear anticlericalism more than they fear imperfect information. He had spent his life among the facts, and he was too honest to disguise them. If, in some cases, I quote in text and Appendix what may seem a superfluity of evidence, those are cases where the full significance of the medieval facts has either been openly contested or (as it seems to me) unduly ignored. Even on these points, there are often further references which I have omitted from my volume, but

which will be handed over in due course, among my MS. collections and books, to the library of the University of Chicago. The catenas of references which I have sometimes given in this volume are taken from such notes. I have had no time to verify each again separately, but I hope that, with all their possible inaccuracies, they may be of real assistance to any student who may care to pursue that particular point further on his own account. Even in my more carefully revised pages, indeed, I dare not hope that these later volumes will lend themselves less to correction than their predecessors; the contrary is more probable; yet here also, as on those occasions before, I trust that each of such corrections may only mean the removal of one single name from a list of witnesses sufficient to support my case without this untrustworthy contribution.

If, again, without any claims as an economist, I deal so largely at this present point with economic history, it is not by choice but by necessity. Not only did Henry VIII's Act of Dissolution lay upon this field a stress which has been too often ignored, but foreign scholars, without any such direct challenge, have recognized its importance. It is clear, writes E. Hoffmann, "that, in our estimate of religious life in medieval monasteries we must pay more attention to economic life than has been the case until now; otherwise we cannot fully understand its development".¹ Moreover, on this ground we can most surely repose upon facts, apart from more disputable deductions. The statistics given in my Chapters xxvi and xxix, which appeal to ordinary untechnical common sense, may explain my meaning here.

Dates in (round brackets) are meant to be definite; in [square brackets] they are only approximate. After sums of money I have often printed another sum [in square brackets]; this means my estimate of its equivalent in British coinage of the present day, using that word *equivalent* only in a popular sense which need not shock the strict economist, and which I explain in my paper on *The Meaning of Medieval Moneys*.²

¹ *Hist. Jahrbuch*, xxxi (1910), 700.

² *Hist. Association Leaflet*, No. 95 (1934). I give evidence for supposing that, just before the Black Death, 1s. would have appeared to men very much as 40s. appears to us, and that, though for 1500 we must multiply only by about 25 or 30, yet the great fall in the index came only after the Dissolution, with the full influence of newly found silver from America.

In my list of authorities, an asterisk is used to distinguish medieval heretics or modern non-Roman Catholics (so far as I can recognize them) from the orthodox, who form the large majority.

One serious apology must be made. I am unavoidably holding up again, until the middle of my next volume, a section which really goes to complete a chapter in Vol. II. One critic pointed out publicly, and another to my knowledge had written, until he learned the facts, that it was a serious omission to have said nothing about the contributions of the Friars to medieval learning. The fact is that I had already written, in my first draft of many years ago, a full acknowledgement of their services, but had reserved it until the time should come to deal with monastic learning in general. I must beg my readers' patience, therefore, for some months or years longer.

It only remains to acknowledge friendly help. Dr Wood-Legh has supplied me with several valuable items of evidence, apart from the use I have made of her recent book. Mr C. F. Wood-Legh has helped me with some very welcome transcripts. The Editor of the *Victoria County Histories* has kindly permitted me to make use of the long description of Abbess Euphemia in Chapter xxxiv. Dr Annie Cameron has most courteously supplied references and documents from the Papal Registers. For help towards my illustrations I am indebted to Mr R. Scott Cockrill, Mr F. Lingard Ranson and Dr F. M. Page. For revision of proofs I owe much gratitude to Professor G. R. Potter and Mr H. S. Bennett. For the Index, as in former volumes, I am entirely indebted to my wife.

Post-script

While this volume was passing through the press Mr T. A. M. Bishop has kindly allowed me to read his essay on "Monastic Granges" which is to appear in a future number of the *English Historical Review*. I seize this chance of calling attention to a very valuable essay which goes far to illustrate and complete what I have tried to express in the first half of this volume.



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ABBREVIATIONS AND AUTHORITIES

ABBREVIATIONS

- A.F.H.* *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum.*
A.L.K.G. *Archiv für Litteratur- und Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Denifle and Ehrle.
C.A.P. *Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia.* Royal Historical Soc.
E.H.R. *English Historical Review.*
M.G.H. Leges. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Leges.*
M.G.H. Necrologia. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Necrologia.*
M.G.H. Scriptt. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores.*
P.M.L.A. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.*
V.C.H. *Victoria County Histories.*
AA. SS. Boll. *Acta Sanctorum* collegit J. Bollandus. Antwerp, 1643.

AUTHORITIES

THIS is no attempt to supply a bibliography, nor even a list of all the books cited in this volume; it is only hoped that it will enable the reader to verify any reference which is not obvious from the text or footnotes themselves.

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INTRODUCTION

IN approaching the lives of men and women who have differed very much from ourselves, everything depends upon the just point of view. Obviously we must not judge them merely from the standpoint of modern society. But is it not equally obvious that we must not go to the other extreme, and judge them exclusively from the standpoint of their own age? Our judgement should be, as nearly as possible, *sub specie aeternitatis*; it should be based on canons which would have appealed to Plato and Marcus Aurelius as well as to St Thomas Aquinas. When a critic says concerning the medieval inquisitor "It was inevitable that he should act as he did; your criticism is a mere anachronism; you might as well criticize a geological process", then it may be asked whether that same critic would insist on adopting that identical attitude towards those who condemned Socrates or Christ?—or (more important still) towards the society whose thoughts and usages encouraged those persecutors? Judge, then, we must, whether we will or not; and here, I cannot help thinking, not only the public but even authors are drawing nearer and nearer to that conception of the historian's duty which, as Lord Acton confessed, was unpopular in his generation. In our own minds we must judge; and, having judged internally, it is generally better that we should make no attempt to conceal our judgement from the public: only, let us strive to view all these things on every side. True, such an impartial view is supremely difficult; but the difficult thing is precisely that which is often most worth striving for—καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος¹—and, if fail we must, let it be in the pursuit of some prize that was worth achieving. A generation has now come which insists upon considering ecclesiastical history not on one side only; whatsoever is true and good for mankind ought to be in some degree comprehensible and appreciable not only by the enthusiastic believer but also by every honest agnostic. Why should our own vision be more obscured in considering St Thomas Aquinas than Jeremy Taylor's was in contemplating Marcus Aurelius?

¹ Plato, *Phaedo*, § LXIII.

A year or two ago, I dipped into a very new book which, as I was told, dealt with monasticism as its main theme. The author starts from the thesis that "the lunatic asylum always excepted, we can study early man to better advantage among monks and beggars than anywhere else". This thesis he elaborates in terms which leave no doubt as to the beggars whom he thus coordinates with lunatics and monks. He describes a group of three tramps whom he had once met upon a desolate road; creatures scarcely human; "a terrible ape-like hair grows upon their lopped and twisted limbs; they seem like an attempt at a vegetable man which has been manufactured and cast aside as soon as finished". Thence the author promises to make us understand monasticism by bringing us down "the road of common experience"; common, that is, to this semi-vegetable tramp and the monk. Most of us, if we thus conceived of the cloisterer, might well feel that "the red and raging eye of imagination" need "pry" no farther, and might willingly abandon the whole subject to those bolder spirits whose curiosity is as persistent in 1930 as Mr Robert Montgomery's was in 1830. Yet in this book, even under the wildest flights, there is an underlying truth of commonplace: for indeed the common impression of the medieval monk among the general public is that of a strange abnormal creature. And this has come about naturally enough, since the subject has too often been abandoned to writers who have made little attempt to grapple with the vast mass of documentary evidence. And, though the present generation is taking far more pains to balance facts and to compromise between hypercriticism and adulation, yet in this field we are still far from such a general understanding as the last hundred years have arrived at upon other questions which were once debated with no less violent party feeling. The fault, however, is not in any lack of public interest. Medieval buildings and their traditions have been enormously popularized by the motor-car and photography. "The modern steam-puffed traveller", as Ruskin called him fifty years ago, is now multiplied tenfold by the oil-puffed excursionist; and even the dullest of these visitors, in face of some great ruin, can scarcely fail to ask, more or less articulately, "What mean ye by these stones?" To this question even the most mawkish of local guides, and the most feebly imaginative, will suggest an answer which can

scarcely go farther astray from the truth than, on the other side, does that comparison of lunatic asylums and tramps. Yet the influence of these guide-books, and of a good many more pretentious volumes which attract the public by their cheapness of price and of thought, tends naturally towards that exaggeration which Mr Kipling has called the "plaster saint". In this field, as in others, the two extremes stand out crudely, and are easy enough to paint. The real difficulty is to seize the features of that average man who, after all, shows us the real type. Every great institution has its notable extremes of good or evil; that which we most want to grasp is what is hardest to put into words, or even to focus in thought. What sort of being was this average cloisterer? What sort of life did he or she lead, day in, day out, as compared with ourselves and our own lives? Let us face these monks directly, and by the directest method, starting not from any assumption of their strangeness, but rather assuming their likeness, their almost identity, with ourselves. If Newman attained to such wonderful penetration of human character under many different forms, it was by the direct and unsparing study of the one man whom he was able to know inside and out, of himself.

British scholars of the sixteenth to the eighteenth century took, I think, a sane view of monasticism in general. They respected the good monks of the past, but had no wish to see the institution back again among us, with anything like its medieval wealth and privileges. Yet this general verdict, however right in the main, involved certain minor injustices, and left room here and there for reasonable protests. Such injustices had become much more common before the Oxford Revival: so that one of the firstfruits of that movement, which itself owed much to the romantic movement in literature, was a generous idealization of the monastic system. Men were weary, and justly weary, of the irreflective and often ignorant abuse repeated from mouth to mouth, not only by what may be truly stigmatized as the Protestant underworld, but even from men who ought to have known much better. S. R. Maitland, in his *Dark Ages*, nailed a good many lies to the counter; so that, when Dean Church described truly the admirable cloister life of Bec in its palmyest days, then his readers naturally adopted this picture as the basis of their monastic ideas.

The Oxford Movement was a necessary and healthy reaction; the rise of Anglican monastic communities bears witness to a need strongly felt in individual cases; and even the cheap sentimentalism which gathers round ruins like Glastonbury, with its claim of messages through spiritualistic mediums, is some degrees better than cheap scorn and misunderstanding on the other side. But always we need to control our imagination by constant reference to facts and common sense. We need to study this past society (if we regard it as worth studying at all) with all our faculties in full balance; we need to ask impartially why the career which appeals to so few in our own day is that which was followed by so many in the Middle Ages. For this purpose, we must begin as I have already suggested, and start from the similarities rather than the differences. For, after all, the medieval monk was in himself our own potential self; the distinction is that his primary choice was conditioned, and then his life was shaped from day to day, by circumstances differing widely from those of present-day England.

Let me here repeat certain things which I have said at different times in the two earlier volumes, by way of necessary brief reminder for this third.

The monk's life, according to the Benedictine Rule, was one of continuous discipline, from above and from within. He was bidden to obey his abbot as Jesus Christ. A monastery was not reckoned as full-fledged, it was not *conventual* (to use the technical term) unless it contained at least thirteen members, answering to the Apostles and their Master. The pope himself, it was finally decided by the Canon Lawyers, could not absolve a monk from his vow of obedience, any more than from the two other *substantialia*, the two other essential vows of poverty and chastity.¹ And the abbot himself was bound by the Rule, though here he had wide dispensing power. The original aim was not to found a new order of clerics, but rather a group of layfolk who wished to save their souls, and who felt that this could best be done in community. It was only later that there

¹ A loophole was found, however, in a logical distinction; the Pope might make a monk into a non-monk, thus absolving him from the whole vow at one stroke. But, short of this almost unheard-of action, no dispensation from any one of the *tria substantialia* was admitted.

came the multiplication of Masses, and therefore of priests, with the lengthening and complication of choir services; and these changes would probably have been disapproved by St Benedict. His plan was one of public psalmody and prayer for about four and a half hours of the day, with regular physical labour for the sake of bodily and mental health, and three or four hours of pious reading, and seven or eight of sleep. Food and drink were plain, but fully sufficient for health; wine was allowed; only butchers' meat was forbidden to all but the sick. The Rule is marked throughout by a spirit of healthy moderation; it enjoins no extreme asceticism; *mutatis mutandis*, it might almost be adopted by a modern colony of plain-living and hard-thinking folk at Letchworth or Golder's Green. In so far as it differs from modern ideals, this is in its elaborate provision for common prayer, and in certain directions which may fairly be called puritanical. For instance, jesting and laughter are forbidden by St Benedict; and this prohibition was strongly emphasized by many later commentators. Moreover, though there is no injunction of absolute silence, yet strong stress is laid upon the duty of *taciturnitas*; and, again, all commerce with the outer world is forbidden, with exceptions which, literally accepted, would become almost negligible. It was quite in the spirit of the Rule that later monastic disciplinarians insisted upon the interception of all letters to and fro, and that they forbade the monk to carry, or even listen to, tidings from the world outside—*rumores*. If, as a matter of fact, monks did become the busiest of medieval chroniclers, and sometimes the most curious of gossips, this was not through their Rule, but in spite of it; this was the better side of those gradual and natural relaxations which, in the other direction, transformed these original apostles of poverty into the wealthiest capitalists of their day. After the Norman Conquest, so many new abbeys or priories were founded that, at a rough calculation, the monastic population of England was trebled within a hundred years. Soon afterwards, the friars brought another very considerable accession of force, both in numbers and in spirit; but, after that, there was no such marked movement in England as there was in parts of France and of Italy and of the Empire. Yet, if we possessed no such heroic reformers as the Continent could boast, this was partly because

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we never fell so low. It seems clear that monastic life, and Church life generally, and social life on all sides, kept a rather higher average of regularity in this country than in any other. There are not very many English names on the medieval Church calendar; but then our need for saints was seldom so desperate; in England, it was only during those few years under Stephen that "Christ and His Saints slept". No country, I think, can show a better monastic record than that of the first English century after the Conquest. Never and nowhere else, among so large a population, was there more of what Thomas Hardy called "that crude enthusiasm without which great thoughts are not thought, nor great deeds done".

We must not regard this century of special enthusiasm as quite uniform either in time or in place. It might be cooling in one district while the first sparks were kindling in another; but we do find, on the whole, a remarkable century of monastic fervour. The disinterested altruist could do no better than to join these monks; on the other hand, what more remunerative investment could the most interested speculator find for himself, if not in the full vigour of life, at least on his deathbed, or by his testamentary dispositions? Everything, therefore, enlisted enthusiasm; and, at rare moments and in a few places, the flame burnt as fiercely as any recorded in history. The records of St Bernard's influence would be almost incredible, if they did not corroborate each other from widely different angles. If we had lived in his day and come under his personal influence, many of us would certainly have thrown in our lot with him. Yet it might have been very difficult to quit the world; and certainly, to most of the converts, perseverance was harder still. The most remarkable sermon, in many ways, that I ever heard, was by the late Fr. Figgis, from the Cambridge University pulpit. At the end of his written discourse, he spoke on for five minutes from his deepest soul, so intimately that the words will not be found in the printed report. He began: "It has been said that the highwayman's motto is 'Your money or your life!'; but Jesus Christ's is 'Your money *and* your life!'" And he went on: "The sacrifice is not easy, and it does not grow easier; it may even grow harder from day to day." There he was practically repeating the experience of St Bernard, who wrote: "It is far

easier to find many worldly folk converted to good, than one monk passing on to something better. He is the rarest of birds—*rarissima avis in terris est*—who climbs but a little higher than the degree to which he may have attained in cloistered religion.”¹ Many men have stuff in them which may explode with almost incredible force under certain conditions; but few possess that immense reserve which alone can maintain lifelong perseverance. Monastic history, naturally enough, is full of dramatic conversions: we have stories not only tragic but tragi-comic; the thief fleeing to the cloister from his theft; the adulterer from his adultery; the debtor from his debts; the knight, conquered in duel, to escape from his conqueror. Such revulsions of feeling, such sudden agonies of terror, with their natural recrudescences even when the shelter of the cloister had been secured, are common enough in all monastic records of all countries and of every age; indeed, all these diversities of time and place do but add to their evidential force. Rancé, the founder of those Trappists who, in the seventeenth century, struggled to revive the strictness of the earliest Cistercians, saw in his garden a lake of fire, and his dead mistress, the Duchesse de Montbazon, struggling breast-high in the flames. When the future Cardinal Manning travelled in Italy, and made friends in several monasteries, he recorded how one monk “told me that there is a brother of eighty-five who has been in the convent since he is eighteen; and he is troubled by scruples, and is heard in his cell lamenting; that he says Mass every day, sometimes in twenty-five minutes, sometimes in an hour and a half; that when he comes to the words of consecration he is afraid of going on.”² The spiritual autobiography of the Bavarian monk Othloh, in the eleventh century, might have come from that very monk’s pen.³

Therefore, much as it needed to convert many men, even in those days of greater impulse and less reflexion than ours, it needed still more to maintain them at anything like the point at which they had made their first vows. We cannot realize the actual facts unless we bear in mind the personal diversities which went to make up that corporate unity of a medieval convent.

¹ *Epist.* 96.

² *Life*, by E. S. Purcell, 1895, I, 359.

³ See my first volume, pp. 81 ff.

Here, as so often, monasticism displays most markedly the characteristics of the Medieval Church in general. Nowadays, much as we owe to birth and breeding, free religious choice does come in very strongly, and different minds do go different ways. Therefore, in the modern Churches, despite many superficial diversities which are due to modern freedom, the fundamental mass of each denomination is more uniform; Romanism consists more of natural Romanists, Anglicanism of natural Anglicans, and so on. But in the Middle Ages, when all were practically compelled to conform, that so-called unity embraced not only the potential Roman Catholic of to-day, but also the potential Anglican, Free Churchman, Quaker, Agnostic, and even the militant Secularist. Therefore, in the later medieval generations, when so many men without real vocation drifted into the cloister much as a modern undergraduate drifts from his University into the nearest accessible profession, those personal differences went far to break the nominal uniformity of the Rule. The dramatic convert might indeed keep up his enthusiasm, and hate this mere earthly life, and run his race with heroic endurance to the last, falling upon death "as the sobbing runner breasts the tape". Yet he might, on the other hand, fall back among those who had scarcely pretended true conversion even to themselves, and to whom monastic disciplinarians would have applied those words of Jude: "Clouds are they without water, carried about of winds...wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." But, since neither of these two extremes is our chief concern, we are transporting our own selves in imagination into the cloister, together with those whom we meet in daily life; we are studying ordinary average human nature as it worked under these very special conditions. How far did the average man keep pace with a Rule which, though moderate enough considering the circumstances, did in fact postulate a steadiness of self-denial and self-control which could scarcely be maintained without constant recollection of these terrible issues of heaven and hell that hung upon obedience or failure?

St Bernard, indeed, did keep his converts not only from apostasy but even from notable relaxations; in those ways, his success was almost more remarkable than his power of winning

them. But that was the success of one extraordinary man for one single generation; the general trend was what we might expect from human nature as we know it. The proportion of men born with a natural bent for pious contemplation and asceticism is not likely to vary appreciably from age to age. A wave of enthusiasm, after the Conquest, multiplied these ascetics in England by three, and, in a few other places, under leaders like St Bernard, by ten or by twenty. Their lives commanded admiration; the wealth from which they had fled as individuals was now heaped upon them as a community; then it began to stick like pitch to their fingers; so that men were soon tempted to enjoy greater comfort in the cloister than they would have had in the world. For this we have explicit and repeated testimony, sometimes in the very lifetime of those who, in their youth, had seen the first beginnings of apostolic poverty. Each generation thus started at one stage lower than its predecessor; the process is described at length by St Bonaventura, who refused the archbishopric of York. The more comfortable a monastery became, the more it tempted founders' kin in especial, and in general all well-to-do neighbours, to make it a dumping-ground for portionless younger children, or even for the unruly, the cripple, the half-witted. Here, again, the facts are exposed very frankly in a paper read before the Belgian Academy by Dom Berlière, of the Abbey of Maredsous. It is easy to picture the heroes of the Cistercian or Franciscan or Dominican revival; or, again, it is painfully easy to picture monastic life at the other extreme, as revealed in the detailed reports and warning injunctions of episcopal visitors; but (we must remind ourselves almost to weariness) the real difficulty is in the average.

Yet this difficulty is vanishing under the intensive examination to which monastic records of all kinds are now being subjected. It is laborious work to focus all these scattered details into a coherent mental picture; and it is even harder, perhaps, to mould them into any verbal synthesis which can supply evidence at every point without overstraining the reader's attention. True, the difficulty is not insuperable; we cannot complain of Monasticism as Maitland did of Feudalism, that we are laying upon one single word "the impossible task of making a single idea represent a very large piece of the world's history; represent

the France, Italy, Germany, England, of every century from the eighth or ninth to the fourteenth or fifteenth.”¹ The ideal of monasticism was so clearly formulated in the different Rules, that its developments ran very nearly the same course in different countries; and again, even in different ages, relaxation followed in certain well-worn channels, and each reactionary reform strove to amend the course by a return to equally well-marked points of departure from the original stream. The special student can, therefore, strike an average for monasticism in his own mind more easily than he can average some other equally important historical movements; and, having thus judged for himself, he can indicate short cuts to other readers. But, the longer men read and discuss the more abstruse documents, the more generally they seem to agree upon certain other easily accessible and comprehensible records as typical. In the stricter sense, it is doubtless absurd to expect that we should find in any one book the average monk of the Middle Ages *tout craché*, to borrow the expressive French phrase. Yet, in a looser sense, sufficient for the practical purposes of the intelligent but non-specialist reader, we have several such books, and, perhaps by common consent, the palm would be given here to Jocelin of Brakelond. Jocelin’s *Chronicle* presents the average monk very happily, as seen in one of the greatest and most orderly houses in Europe. This means that he was, in some ways, a good deal above the average; but still he was average, in the sense that an equally frank narrative from St Albans or Westminster would have given us much the same impression of monastic life, and that Ekkehard of St Gall and Guibert de Nogent give us the same impression from great abbeys in Germany or France. If, as has sometimes been remarked, Jocelin’s monks of lordly Bury show something of the mentality of the squire-parson, then in corresponding records from smaller houses we find the mentality of the yeoman-parson. But everywhere, I think, in nine cases out of ten, there was this very human tendency to settle down first into institutionalism; then to let the institution crystallize into formalism; and, finally, without forgetting heaven, to make the best of both worlds. Jocelin should be read daily and nightly by those who would understand the actuality, as apart from the

¹ Pollock and Maitland, *Hist. Eng. Law* (2nd ed.), I, 67.

mere theory, of monastic life. We must, of course, beware of the *argumentum ex silentio*; we must not suppose that they thought no more than they wrote concerning their personal and solemn dedication to an almost superhuman ideal, or concerning that *Opus Dei*—those seven daily services—in which, quite apart from private prayer and from the night offices, it was their lifelong duty to serve God. Yet justice not only permits, but demands, that we should ask, while we read Jocelin's book, how far it shows their true detachment—as apart from professional and conventional detachment—from the things that are below; and their true attachment to the things that are above. We must ask also—and for this there seems abundant answer—how far they valued the enormous revenues and privileges of the abbey for their own sake, and how far for the sake of the good which those things might enable them to do to their neighbours. When the citizens of Bury were conscripted to go fishing for eels at Lakenheath, what share of those esteemed fish went to the poor, or even to the guesten-hall? Again, while the abbot insisted that tenants should park their sheep in his fold, and thus give him all their manure, what proportion of the resultant crops did he reckon to give back to the world outside his precincts? It was a disgrace, writes Jocelin, that the cellarer should go through the town to collect reap-silver, and to distrain the very poorest for this tax, "sometimes taking their trivets, sometimes their doors, or their other household stuff, so that the old women came out with their distaffs to threaten and scold at him and his men". But wherein did Jocelin see the real disgrace? Was it in this undignified position for one of the most dignified of abbey officials, or in the fact that the abbey, with a princely income, seized these trivets and doors from among the poorest of its tenants? Mark, again, those words in which Abbot Samson congratulated the chronicler on his own comfortable place as plain cloister-monk and abbot's chaplain: "Thou art partaker of my good things, in meat and drink, and riding abroad and such-like." Mark his allusions to superfluity of meat and drink; which, however, did not prevent the brethren from grumbling at their fare.

Therefore, looking back at the material and spiritual characteristics of those centuries which elapsed between the break-up

of Imperial Europe and the foundation of the new Europe, let us recognize that nothing was more natural than the birth of such an institution as monasticism. Nothing more natural, again, than that the reaction should be as important as the action, so that this institution should gradually borrow even more from the great world outside than it had originally lent or given to that outside world; and, lastly, nothing more natural than that the tide of human history should finally leave the ship herself stranded high and dry, with her crew scattered among the life-boats. Let us, however, recognize our own selves in that one side of Abbot Samson, who confessed to Jocelin: "If I could have been as I was before I became a monk, and could have had five or six marks of rent wherewith I could have been supported in the schools, I would never have been monk or abbot." But, imagining ourselves to have drifted into the cloister very much as Samson did, we may perhaps see ourselves reflected still more clearly in those who grumbled at the food, and who thought that the abbey was going to the dogs because its tenants were becoming more well-to-do and independent. We may see ourselves, again, in those who refused to be righteous overmuch and to excite themselves unduly about the conduct of monastic business, "considering that the chief religion of monks is to hold their peace, and pass over the excesses of their prelates". And, clearest of all, we may recognize our kinship with those who were quite determined not to push their zeal for righteousness to suicidal extremes, preferring (in Jocelin's words) to go to heaven as confessors rather than as martyrs. Reading between the lines like this, we shall not be tempted to lose sight of whatever heroism is recorded in that book; we shall rather see Samson the hero in his true stature, side by side with Jocelin and with ourselves. We shall see in him what Carlyle saw; a man like Cromwell or Washington, with nothing in him of the stage hero, but driven on to great and greater deeds by his true-hearted acceptance of all the responsibilities which his privileges forced upon him.

Thus, without forgetting or minimizing the superhuman side of monasticism, we may also look behind this, comparing the monk with others who, without the same explicit profession, have pressed more or less directly towards the same goal.

St Benedict lays great emphasis on courage and strict discipline, directed to the highest ends; the monk is to be God's soldier; that military metaphor occurs more than once in the Rule. But, when we try to give him his true place in the long perspective of history, we must recognize that others also have been God's soldiers; every one of us could draw up a list of present-day saints whom he has known; "there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." George Herbert was a married man; but his *Country Parson* is comparable to the *Imitatio Christi*; for being more human, it is not less near to heaven. We have no right to separate altogether the monk's superhuman virtues from the superhuman courage and endurance which has been shown by entirely unselfish men in war, or in Arctic exploration; or by the doctor in his hospital, the evangelist in a slum district, the philanthropist fighting in defence of suffering or degraded humanity. When we have chosen the very greatest of the monks, it would be rash to assert that these men lived with more profit to the world into which they had been born, or that they left it with souls better armed to play their part in a higher world, than others who might be chosen from widely different professions. There is very deep significance in what has been said of Henry Sidgwick, that he showed every Christian virtue except Christian faith. It is a thought which need not distress even those for whom the Christian faith outweighs all other virtues. For, as Plutarch said long ago: "I would far rather a man should deny the existence of Plutarch, than that he should believe Plutarch capable of the deeds ascribed to Zeus and the other gods." To a Christian, what is not virtuous is no true constituent of the Christian creed. Every generation needs to purge its own dross; and, in so far as any faith leads a man to act wrongly, to that extent it must be a false faith. That was a very false element in medieval faith which compelled scholastic philosophers to conclude deliberately that heresy is the blackest of all crimes, and to burn heretics in consistent obedience to that academic conclusion. In that respect, medieval faith encouraged the herd-instinct in its most mischievous excesses; excesses as unjustifiable as that Pharisaical herd-instinct which led logically to the crucifixion of Christ. And, even as medieval faith came out at its strongest in the

monastery, so also at its narrowest. It is monks themselves who tell us that men are seldom found better than in the cloister, and seldom worse; worse not in actual deed, for almost at every time and in every place the average monk behaved better than the average outsider, but worse in comparison with his profession and his opportunities. And what they say of monasticism in general they say again with special emphasis of the most monkish of monks, the oblates, those who had been brought in as children, who had received all their schooling and training within the precincts, and who knew, or ought in theory to have known, nothing whatsoever of man outside the cloister. The monastery, therefore, while on one side it was conspicuous for class-enthusiasm, was on the other deeply tinged with class-selfishness. This comes out everywhere. It exudes from monastic writers at every pore; naïvely and amiably in a man like Jocelin of Brakelond, and almost ferociously in others, among whom we must include even Matthew Paris, as was emphasized by the late Master of Balliol in his Ford Lectures.¹ In medieval life there were far more extremes than in modern, and those extremes were greater in the monastery than elsewhere. Yet, here again, it is not the extremes that count most heavily; we may very easily over-emphasize them; we need really to understand the average; to think ourselves into the cloister, and to act in imagination under the constant pressure of physical and mental conditions widely different from those of our modern surroundings.

If history never repeats itself, if the historian has not the scientist's resource of multiplied experiment, if we cannot bring the same events together again and again, in order to see whether every similar combination leads to similar results, yet we can lay our finger more directly than the scientist upon the pulse of human life. The slightest hint of what has been said or done at other times by other men may come home more immediately to us, and may flash the light or the heat far more directly from mind to mind, than any but the greatest of discoveries in natural science. As Carlyle has said, there may be a whole new world to us in the mere discovery that another man has thought and felt just as we do. Where two lives are joined in partnership,

¹ A. L. Smith, *Church and State in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1913.

there is something far richer than the aggregate of two separate existences; where a man habitually thinks in terms not only of the seen but of the unseen, there again the value has grown not in arithmetical but in geometrical proportion. Matthew Arnold, speaking in America, rehearsed the Oxford influences of his undergraduate days in terms which have since given inspiration to many others besides Oxford men. He recalled three voices, one alone a local voice, the other two world-wide, but all coming with as clear a message as if they had been heard from living lips in Weimar or Scotland or Massachusetts. One voice was from Carlyle's translation of Wilhelm Meister; another, Newman's from the University pulpit, in his sermon on Trinity Sunday. "After the fever of life; after wearinesses and weaknesses; fightings and despondencies; languor and fretfulness; struggling and failing, struggling and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of this troubled unhealthy state, at length comes death, at length the white throne of God, at length the Beatific Vision." And Arnold's last voice was Emerson's exhortation to every honest and receptive soul: "What Plato has thought, he may think; what a Saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can comprehend."¹

Have not all these words as much force to-day as they had nearly a century ago? A man may still possess Newman's concentrated enthusiasm, if he is willing to pay Newman's price for it; he may still attain to Emerson's balance, if he will weigh the opposites no less patiently than Emerson. The great thing in life is stimulus; then, the honest conscience finds its own direction. A man of Newman's character, in this present generation, might visualize heaven very differently, and yet devote his life with equal courage to an ideal no less disinterested and beneficent than Newman's. Again, we need not follow St Augustine in his belief that unbaptized infants suffer in hell not only the sense of loss but the added torments of fire, in order to share Augustine's fundamental conviction that there is a power working for righteousness in human history; that our duty is not to act the past over again, but to rise above the past; that man's will may wrest final victory from the most crushing defeats; and that the true note to end upon is that from the Epistle to the Hebrews

¹ M. Arnold, *Discourses in America*, pp. 140-7.

with which Augustine concludes his *De Civitate Dei*: "There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." For it is not that Emerson's ideal student *must* think with the great thinkers of the past, or *must* feel with the Saints, but only that he *may*, if conscience tells him that the pearl of price is hidden in that field. It is one of the commonest and most fatal historical anachronisms to forget that Plato or Aquinas could scarcely have thought in this present age exactly as they thought in their own, and that a modern Augustine or Bernard would probably feel somewhat less unsympathetically towards the modern Pelagius or Abailard. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Coleridge recommended Jeremy Taylor with special emphasis to young divinity students, because they might acquire as much mental discipline by vigilantly noting his weaknesses as by following him in his strength. In the cloister also we shall find weakness as well as strength; and it rests only with ourselves to draw instruction from both sides.

Therefore, in this volume and the next, I deal with the monk's daily life detail by detail: not exhaustively, of course, but as best I can within the compass of two volumes. The evidence, coming for the most part from formal documents or from chronicles, naturally gives special emphasis to external features. The reader, it is to be hoped, will not forget that many monks, even among surroundings which were not *prima facie* spiritual, lived a spiritual life as high above that of the ordinary cloisterer as the lives of George Herbert or Keble rose above the majority of village parsons. With great men of that kind I hope to deal at proper length in my last volume; meanwhile, it is necessary to describe the ordinary monk as he appeared to the ordinary observer of his own day: and, for this, we must go to the kind of record which I am using in this present book. By all means let us give these Religious the benefit of every serious doubt. But, where the documents seem to say quite plainly that these men thought and acted very much as we ourselves would have been likely to think and act in the same circumstances, then there is no real charity in the falsification of history; not even in its falsification by a merciful reticence where the reader would expect plain speech.

Let me here repeat, once again, that in English society the

nearest modern analogue to the medieval monk could be found in Oxford and Cambridge before the sweeping reforms of these last hundred years. Gibbon's eye had noted this long ago; and I know that Rashdall felt it very strongly indeed. Gibbon's phrase, "the monks of Magdalen", has become famous; and among those "monks" he describes his old tutor as "one of the best",

The first Tutor into whose hands I was resigned, appears to have been one of the best of the tribe: Dr Waldegrave was a learned and pious man, of a mild disposition, strict morals, and abstemious life, who seldom mingled in the politics or the jollity of the College. But his knowledge of the World was confined to the University; his learning was of the last, rather than the present age; his temper was indolent; his faculties, which were not of the first-rate, had been relaxed by the climate; and he was satisfied, like his fellows, with the slight and superficial discharge of an important trust... No plan of study was recommended for my use; no exercises were prescribed for his inspection; and at the most precious season of Youth, whole days and weeks were suffered to elapse without labour or amusement, without advice or account. I should have listened to the voice of reason and of my tutor: his mild behaviour had gained my confidence; I preferred his society to that of the younger students, and in our evening walks to the top of Heddington Hill we freely conversed on a variety of subjects... During my absence in the summer vacation, Dr Waldegrave accepted a college living at Washington, in Sussex, and on my return I no longer found him at Oxford. From that time I have lost sight of my first tutor; but at the end of thirty years (1781) he was still alive, and the practise of exercise and temperance had entitled him to an healthy old age.¹

We, therefore, in any cathedral close or among the ruins of an abbey, may people those precincts with figures among whom this also would have been one of the best; though others far better stand out here and there among the multitude, and there were others again whose very virtues have rendered them mute and inglorious to us; and, at the other end, such proportion of indifferent or unworthy subjects as we might expect to find in these circumstances. A writer may well despair of summarizing his collective impressions of such a society in any words which would convey a clear and accurate impression to his readers, so different among themselves in character and outlook

¹ Gibbon's *Autobiography*, ed. John Murray, 1896, p. 77.

and education and circumstances. And, for myself, I cling to those words of Michelet which I find Lord Acton to have marked with his approving pencil: in our uncertainties, let us seize upon the concrete fact, so far as we can grasp it, and rest upon that.¹

If I had another life to spend here, it might well be employed upon an attempt to write a brief monastic history without such emphasis as has seemed necessary in my actual published volumes; a history serenely dogmatic not because it works without reference to awkward facts, but because the facts on both sides are at last established, if only roughly, and the road can go straight on without further hindrance. Some day, I venture to hope, a traveller will come along this road in a first-rate motor-car, never pausing for pioneer work with axe or mattock. Already in this present generation we see an extension of what Newman had already noted: "The Cause of truth, never dominant in this world, has its ebbs and flows. It is pleasant to live in a day when the tide is coming in. Such is our own day."² The man of science, in spite of the scolding he often gets for being a mere scientist, and in spite even of his own occasional lapses from the true scientific creed, is increasingly willing to read about religion, if only he may trust the accuracy of what is offered to him.

Meanwhile I find great personal encouragement in the fact that reviewers are willing to take more seriously the profession of faith which I have always made, though perhaps so briefly and occasionally as to be obscured by the emphasis laid upon other things. More than one critic of my latest volume has singled out, as being truly characteristic of the book on one side, those words of my introduction which I therefore reprint here:

Let me put my own belief into just two sentences, which I will ask you to bear in mind all through, and upon which I shall work during the rest of this course, by adding here, adding again there, or

¹ "Quels que soient nos doutes, nos incertitudes, dans ces âges de transition, croyons fermement au progrès, à la science, à la liberté... C'est à l'histoire qu'il faut se prendre; c'est le fait que nous devons interroger, quand l'idée vacille et fuit à nos yeux," *Discours d'ouverture*, p. 263, printed at the end of *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, 1843 (Camb. Univ. Lib. Acton. d. 23.211).

² *University Sketches*, Lecture xx.

in other places softening and breaking the outline. I would say, then, that I regard monasticism as one of the great formative forces in the social life of the Middle Ages; and that, at certain times and in certain places, I would call it even *the* greatest and most beneficent force. Moreover, even at the times of worst decay, the average monk was leading a more regular life than the average outsider. There, then, is the backbone of the figure which I shall struggle to put before you, in all kinds of attitudes and in every possible light that my time will allow. If at any time I seem to say anything incompatible with this central judgement (as I may call it), then the contradiction will be involuntary; I shall somehow have blundered in my presentation, though not, I hope, in my facts. But man is an imperfect animal; human society, at its very best, is imperfect; and most of us hope that the best is yet to come. Therefore it would be strange if the social conditions of a thousand years ago did not display certain defects which, by painful experience and constant struggle, mankind has since managed to remedy, at least in part. The monk's ideal was good—that is our starting-point—but good is always comparative. Within what limitations can we apply that word to the monk? His activities were beneficent on the whole; but with what serious exceptions? Again, we are glad that the monasteries should once have been so numerous throughout the land, that they should have been so populous, so wealthy and so influential. Yet, on the other hand, should we really wish to see them back again here, endowed with their ancient proportion of the national income, and fenced in with legal privileges which gave the monk such enormous advantages over the ordinary citizen? These questions, you will see, are fundamental; and I must try so to marshal my facts as to answer them.



CHAPTER I

A GOOD ABBEY

WE may start with a bird's-eye view from Ordericus Vitalis, that Anglo-Norman monk who has no superior in his grasp of both sides; in his appreciation of all that was holiest in monachism, and in his frank acknowledgement of human weaknesses.¹

His father was probably a married priest, who followed Roger of Montgomery to England and settled under his patron near Shrewsbury.² His piety prompted a pilgrimage to Rome, where he vowed to help in the foundation of a monastery at home. To this house, near Shrewsbury, he gave £200, his two elder sons, and, seven years before his death, himself as oblate. His youngest, Orderic, he gave with £20 to the restored and highly efficient abbey of Ouche, or St-Évroul, in Normandy. The boy was only 10, but a neighbouring priest had taught him Latin for five years past. The father sent him away in fear lest carnal affection should hinder both of them in running the good race for heaven.

Therefore, o God of glory, Thou who badest Abraham go forth from his own land and his father's house and kindred, didst also inspire Odelerius my father to renounce me altogether for himself and to submit me wholly to Thee. Therefore, weeping, he put weeping me into the hands of the monk Rainald, and sent me into exile for love of Thee, nor did he ever see me again. I, a tender child, presumed not to gainsay my father's wishes, but acquiesced readily in all things; for he promised me on Thy behalf that, if I became a monk, I should possess paradise with the Innocents after my death. This covenant having thus been made between Thee and me, with my father as sponsor, then I left my father and kinsfolk, near and far, and mine acquaintance and friends, who with tears and kindly prayerful valedictions commended me to thee, o supreme Adonai Lord. I beseech thee, o gentle King of Sabaoth, to accept

¹ For his portraits of good monks, see *P.L.* CLXXXVIII, cols. 246, 249, 255, 260, 263, 264, 268, 270, 272, 273, 287, 288, 290, 374-5, 415, 416, 426, 427, 431, 432, 455 ff., 495.

² Orderic's autobiographical notices are collected in the preface to Migne's edition, *P.L.* CLXXXVIII, cols. 9 ff.

their prayers, and of Thy great mercy fulfil their prayers. So, as a boy of ten, I crossed the British sea and came as an exile into Normandy. I knew none, and none knew me. Like Joseph in Egypt, I heard a tongue that I knew not. Yet, with help of Thy grace, I found all kindness and familiarity among these strangers. The venerable abbot Mainer received me to monachism at the abbey of Ouche in the eleventh year of mine age; and on the 21st of September [1083] I received the clerical tonsure. Moreover, they gave me the name of Vitalis, instead of my English name which the Normans deemed uncouth.¹... In this abbey, by Thy favour, I have lived 66 years, and have been beloved and honoured far beyond my deserts by all my brethren and companions. I have borne heat and cold and the burden of the day, labouring among Thy servants in the valley of Sorec; and I await surely (for Thou art faithful) the penny which Thou hast promised.

His latest editor, Léopold Delisle, writes:

In spite of his kindly welcome to Normandy, he always looked upon himself as an exile; and the eagerness with which he seizes on the title of Englishman (*Vitalis Angligena*) is nothing but an act of patriotism. This feeling also explains the liberal share which he gives to England in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

In another precious passage, Ordericus describes a priory dependent upon Ouche, Mauleia, apparently at the gates of a castle, and certainly richly endowed by members of the castellan's family.

To these patrons the monks at different times gave much money, wishing to increase the goods of the Church in lawful place, and to provide some comfort for their fellows who should come after them.... Thus by the careful procuration of the monks this cell of Mauleia arose, and grew abundantly by liberal endowments which flowed in for God's honour. The village was excellently planted with vineyards and fertile fields, through which the river Maldra ran freely, and it was strongly protected by the number of its noble knights. These, in their lifetime, give willingly to the monastery from their lands and other possessions; the monastic order is reverently honoured by them, and when the fear of death comes they seek it with all their affections for the help of their soul. The knights there keep cloister with the monks, oftentimes conversing with them on matters both of practice and of theory: thus it becometh a school for the living and a refuge for the dying.

¹ *Odric* and *Odelric* occur among the followers, probably Germanic, of Charles the Bald in 853 and 863.

And, after enumerating a dozen different donations, he adds:

I have made a long story of the endowments given to the [mother] monastery of St-Évroul; but I was far from able to include all in this present page. For there are little gifts, taken from small folk [*mediocribus*] either by blandishments or force, or extorted for a price or in some other fashion, and scattered far and wide throughout many dioceses: therein a body of monks is planted in proportion to the quantity of their possessions, serving God daily for their benefactors in hymns and prayers and a life of continence.¹

Here, then, we have the two sides which students of monachism must keep equally in view all through. On the one hand the ideal, and especially the vow itself, raised men above their ordinary selves, some immensely and others more moderately, in all cases where it had not degenerated into an empty formula. On the other hand, even so able and pious a monk as Orderic accepts frankly the frequent alloy of human selfishness in these acts of devotion and liberality. And (almost as significant) he may quote the example of Abraham, but he does not forget his patriotism.

This last point requires emphasizing here, since exaggerated ideas are often spread abroad which do much to falsify the perspective of history. We shall see in my next volume how the idea of one only Church, and the use of one Latin language among all scholars, did far less to create an international spirit than is often supposed: how, in fact, nationalism was strong in the Middle Ages, even when the rival "nations" were only neighbouring towns or villages. And here, in Orderic's case, we see that monasticism, even at its strongest, seldom succeeded in obliterating national sentiment. Indeed, it sometimes actually increased it, with that double bitterness which is bred of personal repulsion and unescapable daily, or even hourly, intercourse. There is a core of bitter truth in Browning's "Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister"; and the orthodox monastic reformers of the fifteenth century found one of their worst obstacles in the fact that the unreformed monasteries looked upon all outsiders as foreigners. Two instances may suffice here.² At the great Italian abbey of Farfa, in 769, an English bishop was intruded on the monks, and "tyrannized over them for 11 months,

¹ *Hist. Eccl.* pars II, lib. v *ad fin.*; *P.L.* CLXXXVIII, cols. 446-50.

² See the text and notes of Plummer's edition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, where the editor has collected a wealth of evidence: I, 214 and II, 271.

beating some with rods and imprisoning or banishing others". At Glastonbury, in 1083, there was what a twelfth-century Latin chronicler describes as "war" between the Norman abbot and his English monks. He wished to introduce a new style of chant, and they resisted. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tells how

one day the abbot went into the chapter-house and spake against the monks and would have mis-taught them, and sent after laymen; and they came into the chapter-house, on upon the monks, with full weapons. And then were the monks sore afeard of them, and wist not what them to do were. But some ran into the church for refuge, and belocked the doors unto them; and they fared after them into the minster, and would have out-dragged them when they durst not go forth. But rueful things befel there on that day; for the Frenchmen broke into the choir and shot towards the altar where the monks were; and some of these men of war went up to the upper floor and shot adownward with arrows towards the holy place, so that many arrows stuck in the rood which stood upon the altar, and the wretched monks lay about round the altar, and some crept under, and cried instantly unto God for His mercy, since they might get no mercy from man. What may we say, but that they shot mightily? and the others brake the doors down and went in. And they smote some of the monks to death, and many they wounded therein, so that the blood flowed from the altar upon the steps, and from the steps upon the floor. Three were smitten to death, and eighteen wounded.

Florence of Worcester's Latin chronicle tells the same story, even more emphatically on some points, but ending "two of the monks were killed and 14 wounded, and some of the soldiers also received wounds". And Ordericus Vitalis, recounting it very briefly, adds: "many similar stories might be told, if they were edifying to the reader" (*P.L.* CLXXXVIII, col. 335). Again, the first Norman abbot of Abingdon was Ethelelm, a monk of Jumièges. "He came to such a pitch that he forbade any memorial or commemoration of St Ethelwold or of St Edward; for he said they were English boors."¹ It was told as an example of St Anselm's exceptional broad-mindedness that he rescued the English St Elphege, whom the Italo-Norman Lanfranc would have banished from the Church calendar, even though he had been his own predecessor in the See of Canterbury.² We shall see, later on, an official visitor from Cluny

¹ *Chron. Abingdon*, R.S. II, 284.

² Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, lib. I, c. v, § 42: translated in *Life in the M. Ages*, I, 12.

condescending to admit that a certain prior in England was good and honest, "although he is an Englishman".

For monastic vocations and monastic endowments there were two exceptionally strong reasons in the Middle Ages. First, the monastery was an oasis of comparative peace within a wilderness of strife and want and physical suffering such as no modern British reader is likely to have ever glimpsed. Of this, contemporaries were keenly conscious; it is only the paradox of modern apologetics which attempts to deny or minimize the fact. It was a medieval commonplace, which scarcely any medieval writer can be found to question, that the world was steadily growing worse from generation to generation. The idea of progress in this world, which the nineteenth century doubtless exaggerated, was practically foreign to the thirteenth. Every fresh monastic reform had based itself, explicitly, upon the necessity of one more effort for redeeming an almost hopeless world: a world sick both in body and in soul. St Odo of Cluny [940] emphasized the infidelity and the barbarism of the society around him: "for we are all running to evil in headlong haste. . . we are hastening to hell not by one deed, but by all our deeds."¹ The Cistercians claimed to have saved the world from destruction; already Christ had bidden the angel blow his trumpet for the Last Judgement, when the Mother of Mercy fell at her Son's feet and besought Him to spare awhile, "at least for my friends of the Cistercian Order, that they may prepare themselves" for a catastrophe which the visionary still feels to be imminent, since earthquakes in divers places show that the end is close at hand. The same story, with even more emphatic details, was current among the Dominicans and Franciscans when, nearly a century later, they came to arouse a world already sinking back into pre-Cistercian torpor.²

Yet (and here comes the second point) even the worst human horrors were pale compared with what was constantly and authoritatively preached concerning hell fire. St Thomas Aquinas, with all his balance and moderation, devotes more than six folio pages to the pains of the damned, and proves that the

¹ Migne, *P.L.* CXXXIII, col. 564; cf. cols. 570, 584, 588, 591, 607, 611, 612.

² See *Life in the M. Ages*, IV, 258; *Vitae Fratrum*, ch. 1; *From St Francis to Dante*, ch. v; and Sabatier, *Life of St Francis*, ch. III.

flames which torture them are real, not metaphorical, fire.¹ Moreover, although a hesitating opinion of his is sometimes interpreted as showing that he believed in certain mitigations of torture in process of time (*Sum. Theol. Supp. q. 99, a. 3*) yet this construction is vigorously repudiated by Billuart, one of the most authoritative commentators, and it seems irreconcilable with what he says elsewhere. The matter is clearly put by the editor of the Enquiry Bureau in *The Universe* for July 20, 1934. He writes:

The reality of hell fire has never been defined by a solemn decision of Pope or Council, but it is certainly contained in Holy Scripture [and] in the Fathers, and it is practically the unanimous teaching of theologians. No Catholic can deny it without grievous sin.... It is of faith not only that hell is eternal, but also that those who go to hell are punished eternally.... Though the punishment is eternal some Catholics have thought that there might be some kind of "mitigation", brought about especially by the prayers of the faithful. St Thomas Aquinas rightly describes this opinion as "presumptuous... worthless, and resting on no authority" (*Sum. Theol. III, Supp. q. 71, a. 5*).

Again, St Thomas decides, in agreement with St Gregory the Great and Peter Lombard and nearly all Schoolmen who attack the question, that the bliss of the blessed will be increased by the sight of the damned writhing in agony below.² Moreover, so great and good a man as Berthold of Regensburg, the mission-preacher after Roger Bacon's own heart, harrowed his hearers by descriptions which have probably never since been outdone in any language.³

¹ *Sum. Theol. Supp. qq. 70, 98ff.* Richard of Middleton [1290] devotes ten folio pages (*Sup. IV. Lib. Sent.* (Brescia, 1591), III, 701ff.). Calvin's description is far briefer and less lurid (*Inst.* bk. III, c. xxv, §§ 10-12).

² *Sum. Theol. Supp. q. 94.* This fact is so important, and yet has been so vehemently and blindly combated, that I went to the expense of printing the whole section from the authorized Dominican translation in order to defend myself from the charge of bad faith. Any reader may obtain a copy of this leaflet by sending a stamped and addressed envelope to me, care of the Faith Press, Buckingham St, W.C. 2. I need hardly say that the blessed are not represented as rejoicing in others' tortures *as such*; nothing but diabolical cruelty could rejoice in a fellow's agony *for its own sake*. The saints will rejoice, says St Thomas, "by considering therein the order of Divine justice and their own deliverance, which will fill them with joy". St Bonaventura, Franciscan though he was, decided even more emphatically in the same direction: and, though some Schoolmen avoid the subject or pass it over lightly, I know of none who ventures to decide against St Gregory.

³ See vol. I of this work, pp. 441-65; also *hell* in index to G. R. Owst's *Preaching in Medieval England* and *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, esp. pp. 518-24 of the latter volume.

St Bernard himself, I think it may fairly be said, treats fear as the prime motive for "conversion", *i.e.* for refuge in the cloister. Quite typical is this passage from the life of St Stephen of Muret [1120] who founded what afterwards became the Order of Grammont: "He tamed the unwilling flesh with famine; and, anticipating the savage torments of avenging hell, he played the part of persecutor and torturer unto himself."¹ Caesarius of Heisterbach was a model novice-master, in the days of almost highest Cistercian prosperity. He says in one of his homilies to the brethren: "The best manner of preaching seems to be that the sermon should be such as to depress the sinner's heart through the terror of hell; and, next, lest he fall into despair, to raise him to hope by the promise of glory."² I had to emphasize these things in my first volume; but it must be borne in mind that they formed one strongly marked characteristic to the very last, in all minds which had anything of the early monastic fervour. We find it in Johann Busch's autobiography [1450], to which I hope to come in my last volume.³ We find it, as we should expect, among the Carthusians, whose small numbers and strict segregation enabled them to keep more of the original monastic Puritanism than any other Order. Busch's contemporary Dionysius Ryckel, surnamed *par excellence* "the Carthusian", impresses upon his pupils those words of John Climacus:

Even as that which most befits humility is mourning, so that which most gainsays humility is laughter. Cease not to consider the gulf of everlasting fire, and those most inhuman ministers [of God's wrath], and the implacable Judge, and the vast chaos of infernal flames, with that subterraneous abode of fear and utmost terror, and the narrow steps of pitchy darkness that lead from gulf to gulf. . . . In thy prayers, stand before God with trembling, as a culprit stands in supplication before his judge. . . . Let thy sadness and thy mourning be without ostentation; for the devils fear a wholesome sadness and mourning as robbers fear the dog. Let the memory of everlasting fire sup with thee and sleep with thee every night; let it awake with thee, and then negligence will never overcome thee at the hour of psalmody. Mourn therefore; and, if thou mournest not, then let that itself prick thee to mourning.⁴

¹ *P.L.* cciv, col. 1079.

² *Caes. Heist. Hom.* III, 15.

³ Meanwhile, I have translated the story of his conversion in *Life in the M. Ages*, iv, 346.

⁴ Dionysius Cartusianus, *Opera*, xxxix, 613.

We find it, again, even in an episcopal register. One Richard Cotyndone, writing in 1513 to his patron the Bishop of Hereford and explaining why he takes monastic vows in his old age, puts the fear of hell first of all.¹ St Ignatius Loyola was thoroughly medieval in the emphasis which his *Spiritual Exercises* (No. 5) lays upon preparation by "seeing in imagination the length, breadth and depth of hell. The first point will be to see with the eye of the imagination those great fires, and those souls as it were in bodies of fire". The other four points are no less ghastly.

Moreover, not only were the horrors of actual hell emphasized, but also the overwhelming probability of finding one's way thither, in default of constant struggles and exceptional grace. Fr. Godts has shown, by the most conclusive patristic, theological, and exegetical evidence, that the consensus of the Fathers is incomparably more unanimous in favour of the doctrine that most of mankind will go finally to damnation, than it is in favour of the Immaculate Conception or Papal Infallibility or the plenary inspiration of those books which Protestants (following St Jerome) reckon as apocryphal and of inferior authority.²

A sensitive soul might be haunted all his life long by such ideas, and thus (it may almost be said) stampeded into asceticism as a cheap insurance against incalculably worse disasters. It was logically incontestable that even the severest mortification was a very cheap bargain. Moreover, the attitude of many of the best men towards episcopal work cannot be explained entirely by the too frequent worldliness of the medieval bishops, under temptations far greater than those which beset them in modern times. It was due also to this emphasis on hell which made many look upon the cloister as the only safe life, even though we sometimes find qualified admissions to the contrary. I have given many instances of this in my first volume; but another may be added here. In her recent *St Louis of Toulouse*, Miss M. R. Toynbee writes concerning this devoted friar: "As bishop he

¹ *Reg. Mayew*, p. 176. Compare also St Anselm's meditation on hell, printed in *Life in the M. Ages*, iv, 96.

² See Appendix. He sums up: "Does the greater part of *Adult Catholics* go to perdition? Yes, answer again all the Saints; yes, answer all the Theologians and Commentators on Holy Scripture anterior to the days of Protestantism."

considered that it was impossible for him to realise the Franciscan ideal. . . . 'I am altogether determined to be quit of a cure of souls. It is enough for me if I am able to give an account of my own soul to God', he said" (pp. 125, 128).

The opposite consolatory consideration, the bliss of heaven, is naturally frequent in monastic records: yet I think less frequent, and certainly far less vivid; just as, in the painted or sculptured Doom, the medieval artist is quite unable to charm us with the souls rising on God's right hand as strongly as he disgusts us by those whom he sends down on the left to the jaws of hell. Here, however, let me quote one of the favourable examples. William, Abbot of Roskilde in Denmark, lay on his death-bed in 1203. One of the brethren then had a vision: a voice bade him rise from his bed and follow.

Then he was brought to a place that he knew not; and at last they came to a delightful plain adorned with flowers, and entered a building of vast size, all built of marble, no words of his could tell the brightness of that house, the sweetness of the odours and the wondrous delights. There was a throne therein, adorned with precious gems and gold thrice refined; and in the midst of that seat lay a golden crown, studded with the most precious stones, but as yet unfinished. Around the throne sat four men in white garments, setting golden plates with precious stones for the perfection of that crown. . . . They said: "This is the throne which your abbot earned at the time of his conversion from the world, when for Christ's sake he left his house and riches and the honours of this world, and denied himself, bearing his cross in the train of Christ his Redeemer; and with this crown he will be crowned, when it is finished by the many tribulations and dire persecutions which he endured for the observance of the Order."¹

It has been said with much truth that, to believing minds in those days, heaven seemed nearer than the roof of one's house; but it may be said with even greater truth that hell seemed nearer than the cellar. The two considerations cannot, in the nature of the case, be sharply separated from each other; and both worked to the same end of "conversion". The quiet soul fled to the cloister to avoid sin; the "stormy working soul" fled thither to wipe his sins out.

And, when we consider the sacrifice not of a whole life, but

¹ *AA.SS. Boll.* April 6, § 50.

of lands or money, we see how medieval eschatology must have been still more influential here. However little a man may have been impressed by this in his days of health and prosperity, it had an immense influence in sickness or on the death-bed; an influence which, naturally enough, the Church was tempted to exploit. Charles the Great, in his capitulary of 811, commands his officials

to enquire whether that man has truly renounced the world who ceaseth not daily to increase his own possessions in every way and by every device, persuading with speech of the happiness of the kingdom of heaven and threatening with the everlasting pains of hell; and whether such men, in the name of God or of any saint, despoil of their possessions both rich folk and poor when they are of a simpler nature and untaught or incautious, and disinherit such men's lawful heirs, and thereby force many men to perpetrate offences and crimes by reason of the want to which they have been reduced; for it is almost necessary that they should practise theft and robbery when another man hath snatched away that paternal inheritance which would otherwise have come to them.¹

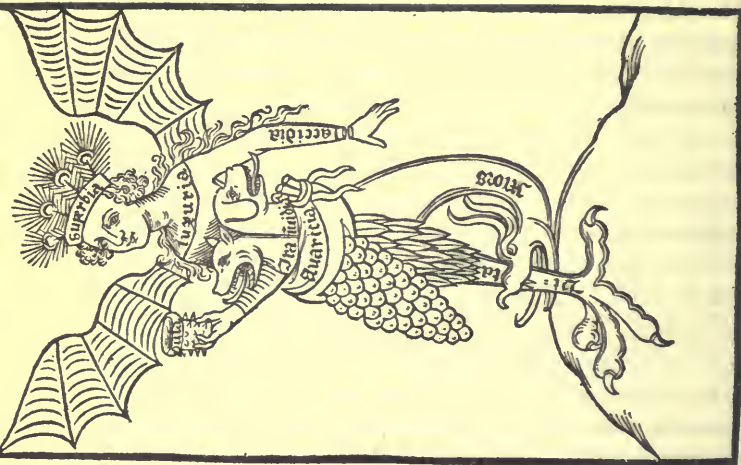
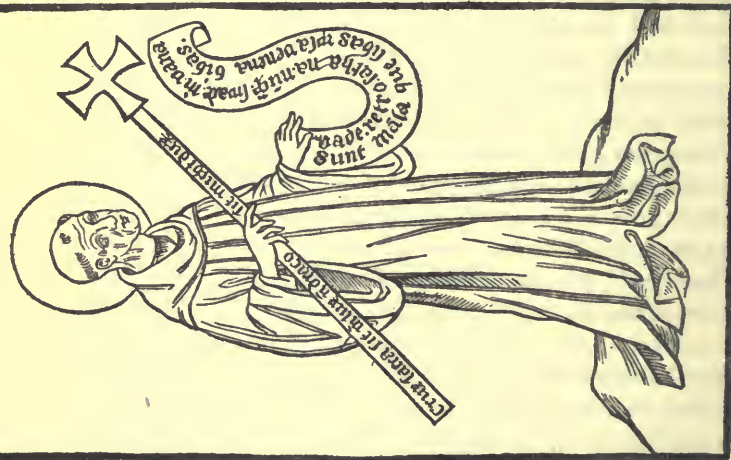
It may be helpful, at this point, to take a typical case of monastic foundation and development; we shall thus have a skeleton which we can clothe with those scattered details which will form the bulk of this present volume. The author of the brief chronicle of Afflighem, which covers only a single generation, gives one of the best examples known to me of the birth and growth, at a period of religious enthusiasm, of an abbey which settled down afterwards into the usual routine. It is not comparable, of course, to the truly epic story of Cluny or Cîteaux or Assisi; yet it is typical of a great many others during what may be called the heroic age of monasticism.² The chronicler was not strictly contemporary with the events he describes; but, like the authors of the *Speculum Perfectionis* and the *Magnum Exordium Cisterciense* and the *Coming of the Friars Minor into England*, he tells us what he had heard from survivors of the first pioneer band.

In the heat of the struggle between Hildebrand and Henry IV (1083), a monk of Ghent went preaching round Flanders and Brabant, and converted six knights "to leave all their ill-gotten

¹ *M.G.H. Leges* (1835), I, 167.

² D'Achery, *Spicilegium* (1723), II, 769 ff.

gains, and to follow, in poverty, the Master of the Poor". They settled in a wild spot, notorious as a den of robbers, and started with three loaves of bread, a cheese, and a few tools with which they began to till the soil. They were joined presently by two other knights, each of whom had a murder on his conscience and hoped to earn forgiveness by this sacrifice. The little company attracted powerful patrons both in State and in Church. The bishop sent them two monks from Aachen, which seemed the most efficient abbey in his diocese, and they were joined by a third from Verdun. But here the devil made a furious attack upon this half-built fortress of God; entering into one of the original six knights, "he severed him as a Judas from the twelve Apostles, or as Nicholas from the first band of Deacons"; the man returned to his vomit, and did what he could to poison public opinion against his former associates. But the Archbishop of Reims protected them, and they pulled through. After three years from the beginning, they were joined by a brilliant young cleric; then followed two years of peace and prosperity; numbers were still few, but faith and enthusiasm were strong. "Some, indeed, who had not the spirit of God, were turned to flight by the excessive labours; but those who were kindled with true love of God, were terrified and purified (as we read in Job) by the ruin of the wicked." In the sixth year, the little community had attracted such attention that their numbers rose to the consecrated Benedictine twelve; and then they felt able to elect an abbot. They chose Fulgentius, the Verdun monk, who, resisting for some time, at last accepted the dignity lest he should be the first to give an example of disobedience. Since that young cleric had just joined them, Fulgentius chose him for prior, and these two worked together for nearly 35 years in almost incredible peace and concord. Their first convert was Heribrand, "prince of a castle hard by", who had a vision of future damnation which he could not shake off, and whose wife consented to join with him in monastic vows. He summoned all his retainers, and "girt for the last time with his knightly belt, and with his own banner flying, as one armed against spiritual iniquities, he marched to Afflighem as to war, at the head of his friends and kinsfolk, with his wife at his side, no longer wife but sister". The wife was permitted sometimes to visit their five young



THE PEACE OF THE CLOISTER

On the right, the Dragon of Seven Deadly Sins. *Pride* in the head, *Lechery* in the bosom, *Gluttony* in his right hand and *Sloth* on the left arm; *Wrath* and *Envy* and *Avarice* in the belly: Death biting the Life upon which it stands. Against it the cloisterer is armed with the cross, upon which is written: "Let the Holy Cross be my light: let not the dragon be my leader." On the scroll in his left hand: "Get thee behind me, Satan; never persuade me to vanity; that is an

children, but "the father remained steadfast in God's service to the end of his life". All those five children, in process of time, took the cowl. One imitated his father, persuading wife and children to follow his example. Another, left a widower, "joined God's army with his sons and daughters". The next two came in as boys, leaving worldly joys untasted. At length the fifth, who was also the eldest, came in after a severe illness, and thenceforth "lived all the more devoutly in holy conversation as he had lingered longer in the world....He gave the monastery eight oxgangs from his patrimony, leaving all the rest, though unwillingly, to his daughter." Heribrand's brother, in due time, left his own high estate and became one of the humblest of the monks in the abbey. Godfrey of Bouillon, on his way to the First Crusade, lodged at the new abbey and made a substantial gift of lands; his countess bestowed the revenues of a parish church upon them, and his brother Baldwin was also a warm patron of this new community. It became, as a modern writer says, "the favourite abbey of the Crusades...the St-Denis of the Low Countries".¹ The last three chapters of this brief chronicle are filled with a long catalogue of noble patrons and fresh endowments: two mills, two more churches; and twenty-four valuable acquisitions of land. One great gift came from a lord brought in *ad succurrendum*; another from a knight who took the cowl after grievous wounds in war; another from two brothers who "as voluntary exiles from their home, sought for their true fatherland; and, passing by some nearer and richer abbeys, chose rather to gain fellowship with us".

Here the chronicle breaks off, during the lifetime of the first abbot, who died in 1122. The seventeenth-century compiler, however, records the compact which the first generation made among themselves.

It is fit that the first beginners should leave an example for imitation.... We have been able to find no devouter way of salvation than that we should seek food and clothing by the labours of our own hands, and should remain content with these. But since it is written *The earth is the Lord's*, and again, *He giveth seed unto the sower, and bread to eat*, therefore we promise to give unto Him, for the use of His poor, the tenth part of all our tillage and of all that we possess.

¹ E. Michel, *Abbayes et Monastères de Belgique* (Brussels, 1923), p. 68.

This vow, in presence of our abbot Fulgentius, we his first monks, with those that are to come, do now renew and confirm. Therefore we will give a tenth part of our corn, whether it be bought or grown in the field, and a tithe of our silver, whether from altar-offerings or from any other contribution to the brethren's uses. Tithes shall be given from wool, cheese, butter, lambs, calves, fish, eggs, and from all manner of fruits and of uses; for God is better pleased by the upholding of His own members than of walls.

All this was before 1122, the year in which the first abbot died. Other documents record the burials of great nobles at the abbey, between 1121 and [1240]. This, as we shall presently see, means wealthy endowments; and in [1150] we find Abbot Arnulf described as "a most eager defender of the rights of our abbey", by whose efforts it regained the tithes which it had unjustly lost. And then, before 1188 at latest, we find the abbey in a very different light from that of its early chronicle.

St-André at Bruges had been founded about 1105 as a priory dependent upon the monastery of Afflighem. It grew rapidly in wealth, and the ten or more monks who formed the community in 1187 had become impatient of subjection. Relying upon a story that the priory had once possessed charters of liberty, which had been stolen and destroyed by a wicked monk of Afflighem, they raised the standard of revolt, elected an abbot of their own, obtained the favour of the count, and began negotiating for episcopal confirmation of their choice. The monks of Afflighem, arguing with justice that they had possessed this subject cell for more than 80 years, excommunicated the rebels and warned the public against business dealings with them. They went to the count and begged him to repress this rebellion by force: but he answered: "I have never seen or heard that monks could be brought back to religion by violence, but rather by evangelical exhortations and the lessons of the holy Fathers."

But (continues the chronicler) a strange perversity suggested to [the abbot of Afflighem] that he should call at once from his abbey some of the monks whom he knew to be most fit for acting in this affair; in order that, with large numbers at his back, he might destroy the priory, whose buildings were not as yet very strong. His monks, therefore, more obedient to evil than justice could demand, when they learned their abbot's intention, hastened to mount on horseback, and galloped in great numbers to our monastery. Beating often and

violently at the gate, they called upon our porter to open at once. He, a very old man who leaned upon a staff, was terrified at first by the tumult outside and by the sight of this assembled multitude; but, when their words had apprised him of their intentions, he answered "Verily I say that I know you not, for ye belong not to this sheep-fold." At these words, a monk of Afflighem answered in furious indignation: "Open, I say, open, that we may come in." The porter was somewhat wroth at these words, and answered: "Thou also art one of our enemies, for thy words bewray thee; and the keeper of this gate will obey neither thee nor thine." Then one of the young monks of Afflighem, full of the boldness of youth, leapt upon the wooden fence which, instead of a wall, surrounded and defended our priory. The porter, seeing this assault, repulsed him so shrewdly with his staff that the presumptuous youth fell head foremost to the earth. Another monk, of gigantic stature, beholding the fate of his fellow and trusting to his own bodily strength, burst open the little window in the gate: but our watchful porter no sooner saw this than he drew blood from the aggressor's fingers. The monks of Afflighem, seeing clearly that neither their numbers nor their force could get the better of this weak old man's courage and energy, withdrew in confusion. . . . They dared not attempt further violence against our brethren, by reason of the neighbourhood of the count of Flanders who favoured us.

The affair ran through a long course of chicanery; the monks of St-André were resolved rather to spend the whole revenues of their priory in litigation than to give up their project; and finally "after much expense and many troubles" they procured a charter by which Afflighem renounced its rights of control in consideration of a cession of territory and a yearly tribute of ten marks.¹

¹ *St-André*, pp. 42 ff.; D'Achery, *Spicilegium* (1723), II, 778.

CHAPTER II

THE MONK'S ESCAPE FROM HELL

IT must be realized, then, that behind every true monk's vocation, and behind the generosity of every founder or benefactor, there was a belief which it is even more fatal to neglect than it would be to neglect the influence of Rousseauism upon revolutionary France, or of the optimistic conviction of progress upon Victorian Britain, or of Marxism upon the Soviet Republics. Nearly all men believed more or less passively during life, and very actively on their death-bed, that the last breath would decide for them between an eternity of unspeakable torment or of unimaginable bliss: moreover, that the main deciding factor would be a man's belief in the Church doctrines and his reception of the Church's last formal rites.¹ Hence the horror of intestacy not only for its worldly disadvantages, but from the spiritual point of view also. For those who had not made written wills (and only a small minority did this even in the later medieval generations, when education was spreading more widely) were bound to make their testamentary dispositions verbally to the priest who came to administer the last unction and the last communion.² Many, even of those who had lived most carelessly, would feel at the last that, even though future life were a gamble, the safest course would be to bet upon the priest. And the essence of priestly sanctity, here, seemed to be in the monk. Everything conspired to attach especial virtues to the monastic habit. First, of course, the real piety and self-

¹ Except, of course, for the fact that mere physical suffering or weakness prevents many dying folk from thinking coherently about anything whatever except their own immediate feelings. Rancé wrote once: "I was struck by the death of certain persons, and by the insensibility which I remarked in them at that awful moment which was to decide their eternal fate." Thus came his own conversion to the strictest monastic life: he was resolved to think while thought was possible (Chateaubriand, *Rancé*, p. 96). Compare *The Pilgrim's Progress*, where Mr Badman dies as peacefully as a chrisom-child.

² A Spanish medievalist assures me that the feeling is strong still among his fellow Roman Catholics in that country. The horror of hell shows itself there, as in medieval Europe, by the common belief that sudden death is a token of Divine vengeance.

sacrifice of monastic pioneers, and their steady maintenance of a high spiritual standard, which kept much of its value even when the original gold was represented mainly by the paper currency of the monk's outward dress. Popes themselves encouraged, however indirectly, the superstitious value attached to the monk's frock and cowl: for they pronounced sentence of excommunication *ipso facto* against his leaving these garments, quite apart from actual apostasy.¹ The monk not only wore his habit night and day, but was buried in it.² A Cistercian "of good life" [1200], dying of fever, besought the infirmarer to take off his heavy frock and put on the lighter scapular, which was worn by monks during their hours of labour. His soul was met at the gate of paradise by St Benedict, "who asked: 'Who art thou?' 'I am a Cistercian monk.' 'Nay; for, if thou art a monk, where is thy habit? This is a place of rest; wilt thou enter herein in thy working-dress?'" So he could only walk round the walls and peep in at the windows, and see how it was thronged with reverend elders, one of whom at last interceded for him. St Benedict then allowed him to return to life and make amends; his abbot clothed him in the frock which he had cast off in fever, he closed his eyes again and went happily to heaven.³

We shall see how the reception of frock and cowl enabled the monk to start his cloister life with a soul as clean as if it had come fresh from the baptismal font: therefore the wearing of this spiritual uniform contributed enormously to the chances of personal salvation. Herbert, the Cistercian who had known St Bernard in the flesh, is persuaded that all true Cistercians must come to heaven.⁴ The early Dominicans passed the word

¹ Decree of Boniface VIII, *Sext. Decret.* lib. III, tit. xxiv, c. 2. The attempts of later casuists to evade this sentence have inspired one of the most remarkable pages in Pascal's *Provinciales* (Letter vi). I have myself spoken in 1897 with a Franciscan of Southern Italy who, when the authorities met popular manifestations against monks and friars by presenting that these should wear only ordinary clerical dress in public, drew upon himself severe punishment by pleading with his General that this was a sort of apostasy.

² E.g. *Rites of Durham*, p. 51.

³ Caesarius, *Dial. Mirac.* dist. XI, c. 36: cf. XII, 39; also *Alphabet of Tales*, E.E.T.S. pp. 295, 341.

⁴ For this and other instances see vol. I, pp. 26, 89-90, 249-50, 309, 328, 372, 374, 381-2, 478, and Appendix 10; also Molinier, pp. 26, 38, 40, 41, 69; *Grestain*, p. 41; *Luçon*, I, 381; *Cart. Molesme*, I, 136; Ordericus Vitalis, *P.L.* CLXXXVIII, cols. 247, 279, 282, 442, 445, 448, 466, 632, 645, 862, 917; Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, I, 628; *Rites of Durham*, p. 239; Bulliot, p. 262; Henry, p. 171.

round, "Know for certain that few or none of our Order are damned."¹ There was sometimes a similar belief among the Benedictines, and St Francis Borgia had a Divine revelation to the same effect with regard to his own Society of Jesus. But one of the most interesting beliefs of the kind grew up among the White Friars (Carmelites). Joannes Grossus writes as follows in his *Viridarium* (A.D. 1430):

St Simon Stock oftentimes besought the glorious Virgin, Mother of God, the patron of our Order, that she would fortify us who are called after her name with some privilege, saying daily most devoutly in his prayers [that hymn beginning] *O Flower of Carmel*. So one day, while he prayed thus with all devotion, the glorious Virgin and Mother of God with a multitude of angels appeared unto him, holding in her hand the scapular of the Order, and saying: "This shall be the privilege for thee and all the Carmelites, he who dieth in this habit shall be saved."... Therefore, by reason of this great privilege, divers princes of England, as Edward II... and Henry duke of Lancaster, who is said to have distinguished himself by many miracles, and many other nobles also of that realm, wore the scapular of our Order secretly, and finally died therein.

Father Benedict Zimmerman, the editor of these Carmelite records, adds: "This is not to be wondered at; for, from the time when the Franciscans had subdued the whole world, so to speak, to themselves, numberless Christians, without in any way renouncing the world, did nevertheless clothe themselves at their latter end in the habit of the Friars Minor, in order to die therein." The Carmelite General Chapter of 1374 complained that "the Dominicans were striving maliciously to deprive them of this privilege".²

Nature herself bore witness to these virtues. Of Guillaume de Grimoald, abbot at Auxerre and at Marseilles before he became Pope Urban V, "it was said that he had come into the world bearing in his body the form of a Benedictine cowl; this had already happened to another pope, St Celestine V, in the previous century".³ The cowl was recognized in heaven. At the Cistercian abbey of Hemmerode, in [1200] a priest on his

¹ *Vitae Fratrum*, p. 216.

² *Mon. Hist. Carm.* pp. 339, 352, 354. For other instances of the connexion between the monastic habit and salvation see Thomas Cantimpratanus, pp. 22-4 and 389-91.

³ Henry, p. 311.

death-bed saw Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary "who helped me to say certain Hours which for my infirmity I was not able to chant". Then the prior asked him how they were clad, and he made answer: "They wore cowls, even as we do."¹

It was a natural consequence of this belief that many rich folk took the cowl in the last days or hours of their life. They had not, perhaps, lived religiously, but they hoped to die as Religious. They became, according to the language of the time, monks *ad succurrendum*; it was their last succour in spiritual shipwreck, the soul's life-belt; though, as Dom Félibien complains in his *History of St-Denis* (p. 217) they brought no spiritual succour to the monastery. They often brought, however, very rich endowments; for there is no recorded instance, I believe, of a poor man received *ad succurrendum*. The list of benefactors to St-Denis, dating from about 1260, contains the names of 82 monks *ad succurrendum*.² A few cases may be recorded here in addition to what I have already printed in my first volume. I have only one correction to make there: I implied that the Franciscans were comparatively free from reproach on this score, whereas in fact the later friars were among the busiest vendors of what may be called the death-frock.

In 1186, two brothers of the great house of Coucy

being about to go the way of all flesh, resolved to give from their earthly possessions to the poor whereby they might deserve to be received into everlasting habitations. So, for greater trust of propitiating God, they betook themselves to [the Cistercian abbey of] Ourscamp, where, having taken the habit of religion, they at length gave up their souls into the hands of the Father of Heaven.

The two surviving brothers of these two knights publicly confirmed the gift "by the laying of a book on the high altar, in that same day and hour wherein their brothers' bodies were buried".³ Again, at St-Vincent-de-Laon, a great slab still existed in [1680] with the inscription "Étienne de Cour Renaud, formerly canon of the cathedral, monk *ad succurrendum* of St-Vincent, awaits the resurrection of the dead and the life to come. Amen." In the obit-book he is recorded to have left 26*l*.

¹ Caes. Heist. *Hom.* I, 67.

² Félibien, ccvii ff.

³ Peigné-Delacourt, p. 269.

for his anniversary, and another 100*l.* when he took the cowl *ad succurrendum*.¹

But three of the most interesting cases come from Petrus Diaconus, chronicler of St Benedict's own abbey of Monte Cassino [1150]. I have dealt with them more briefly in my first volume; but their significance must be brought out fully here. Peter relates how

a certain man of French race and of very great power had defiled himself, from childhood upwards, with such crimes that there was no part of his body but was corrupted by its own vice. Coming to death, he called the brethren of a certain abbey and besought that the monk's cowl might be granted him; and, having been clothed in those sacred garments, he gave up the ghost forthwith. To a certain servant of God, who dwelt hard by, the Lord vouchsafed a vision of all that befel the dead man's soul. For, no sooner had it left the body, than a terrible crowd of demons bound him with fiery chains and strove to bear him down to the flames of hell, when the most blessed father Benedict stood in their midst, with his pastoral staff in hand. Whereupon the fiends, conscious of losing their prey, cried: "O Benedict! thou knowest how many souls, for this long time past, thou hast stolen from our hands; but as for this man, who never wrought one good deed, thou art unjust if thou strivest to wrest him from our grasp." To whom the Saint answered: "Lest I should even seem to do you injustice, scan ye this man's deeds; and, if he was in any way conscious of your works from the time that he took my cowl, then let him remain in your hands." Then that malign assembly, feeling itself reasonably conquered, vanished into thin air.

On another occasion, while a monk of Monte Cassino lay on his death-bed, a demoniac broke out into lamentations:

What hast thou done to me, O Benedict, at this hour? Thou hast torn from my power this monk Angelo, because he hath worn thy cowl for a brief space, and hast brought him into thy fellowship of heaven!

But the other side of the shield was shown a few years later.

In those days [1122], when the brethren of our abbey at Capua had granted the monastic cowl to a sick man at death's door, the clergy of the cathedral of Capua assembled with an armed band, and found that he had just breathed his last. Therefore, maddened with the stings of iniquity, they stripped him of the monastic habit and

¹ Wyard. p. 270, reading *expectat* for *expecta*.

threw those garments into the public street, to be trodden under foot by all that passed by.¹

St Benedict was certainly very lucky to obtain a verdict for his client in that first of Peter's cases, under shelter, it must be supposed, of the notorious obscurities and ambiguities of Canon Law. Gratian, in his *Decretum* (pars 1, dist. XLVII, c. 9, *difficile*), quotes Justinian's *authentica de monachis* to the effect that "to become a monk taketh away all wickedness". In that Bible of the Monks, the book called *Vitaspatrum*, it is told of the hermit St Antony that he saw, in a vision, the devils claiming his soul in virtue of his sins, and the angels replying, "It is not lawful for you to cite any before he became a monk, but only after." In a later chapter, among the *Sayings of the Elders*, comes a similar maxim—"The same virtue which I saw hovering over baptism, I saw also over the monk's garment when he took the spiritual dress."² From that time forward, we find it claimed that the acceptance of monachism is equivalent to a second baptism: the Religious rises at that moment from before the altar as pure as the child from the font. This is most clearly and moderately expressed by St Thomas Aquinas (*Sum. Theol.* 2a, 2ae, q. 189, art. 3):

The vow to enter religion being perpetual, is greater than the vow of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which is a temporary vow; and as Alexander III says, *he who exchanges a temporary service for the perpetual service of religion is in no way guilty of breaking his vow*. Moreover it may be reasonably stated that also by entrance into religion a man obtains remission of all his sins. For if by giving alms a man may forthwith satisfy for his sins, according to Dan. iv, 24, *Redeem thou thy sins with alms*, much more does it suffice to satisfy for all his sins that a man devote himself wholly to the divine service by entering religion, for this surpasses all manner of satisfaction, even that of public penance, according to the *Decretum* (xxxiii, q. 1, cap. *Admonere*) just as a holocaust exceeds a sacrifice, as Gregory declares (*Hom. xx, in Ezech.*). Hence we read in the *Lives of the Fathers* (vi, 1, No. 9) that by entering religion one receives the same grace as by being baptized. And yet even if one were not thereby absolved from all debt of punishment, nevertheless the entrance into religion is more profitable than a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which, as regards the advancement in good, is preferable to absolution from punishment.

¹ *Chron. Casin.* in Migne, *P.L.* CLXXIII, cols. 773, 777, 899.

² *P.L.* LXXIII, cols. 155, 994.

St Antonino, in his *Summa*, repeats St Thomas *verbatim*, and adds illustrations from other sources, ending with that sentence from Justinian. So again the most popular of medieval manuals of Canon Law, the *Summa Angelica*, written about 1480 by a Franciscan who enjoyed high favour at the Roman Court (*s.v. Religiosus*, § 46). He writes:

Is all penalty of sins taken away by entrance into Religion? The answer is *yes*; and it is thus proved. If any man gave a thousand thousand ducats, he would be thought to be rightly freed from all pain of sins, according to that word in Daniel iv, 24, *Redeem thou thy sins with alms*. Much more then in the entrance into Religion, whereby a man offereth unto God his whole self, which is of more value than thousands of thousands of ducats.

He goes on to quote in favour of his conclusion St Thomas, St Bernardino, and St Bernard, who wrote that monachism

doth reform God's image in man, fashioning us like unto Christ as baptism doth. And, in short, it is as though we were baptized for the second time; since, by the fact that we mortify our members which are upon the earth, we put on Christ again (*De Praec. et Disp.* c. 17).

The careful reader will note that this "second baptism" avails only if there is real conversion of heart; St Thomas explains this, St Antonino repeats the explanation at greater length, and the *Summa Angelica* implies it, by speaking only of the penalty (*poena*) as remitted by taking monastic vows, and by not mentioning the guilt (*culpa*) of sin. But the ordinary monk did not always grasp these subtle distinctions, as we may see from the words of St Peter Damian, monk, cardinal, and friend of Gregory VII.

Yet I know that, in writing thus, I am offending certain brethren; to wit, those who think that the absolution from offences and the culmination of [all] virtues consists in the mere act of conversion. Let it suffice me to answer that, in writing as I do, I wish not (as St Paul saith) to cast a snare upon any man, but only to provoke him to that which is good. But I will expound wherefore I dwell so long upon this point, since it seemeth to the purpose. For a certain brother came to me from a monastery and confessed what he had done in his lay life. Now, if I mistake not, he owed seventy years of penance, as it seemed to me, according to the sacred canons.¹ But

¹ According to the *Penitentials*, which officially prescribed certain tariffs of time for certain sins. It was thus that, when the Indulgence system grew up, these were always reckoned, and are still, in terms of days, months or years.

he had been about seven years in the habit of Religion; and, when I asked how much penance he had yet performed for those sins, he answered that he had indeed confessed all to the lord abbot, who, however, had enjoined no other penance beyond the common observance of the rules of the monastery; for he held that the sole fact of conversion sufficed fully for absolution from all his sins. What shall I say? I confess, the matter displeased me sore; I contemned and shuddered and cried aloud that the man was deceived, seeing that he had not yet even begun that penance which, by this time, he might have consummated through divers manners of affliction.¹

And, as we have seen from Peter's story, the indulgential value of the bare act of conversion might be over-estimated even by this exceptionally learned monk, envoy to the Imperial Court, librarian and chronicler of a great abbey. Error, it is true, was especially easy in this matter of remission of sins, since even the official phraseology for Indulgences was habitually loose and inaccurate. The Plenary Indulgence was officially advertised as being a *culpa et poena*, while its real efficacy was only against *poena*, and the *culpa* had still to be removed by the sacrament of penance—that is, by a process quite distinct from the procuration of the Indulgence. This ambiguity of language must have contributed much to that belief which Berthold of Regensburg stigmatizes as fatal to the souls of “thousands” of churchfolk [1250], viz. that the mere payment of money to a “penny-preacher” purchased the Indulgence and remitted the sin. And, when a man like Peter could pass this vision on to his readers without a word of warning, we may see how strong was popular faith in the supernatural virtues of the monastic habit as such.²

On the other hand, one must make sure that this sovereign remedy was taken in time. Caesarius (dist. XII, c. 2) writes concerning Ludwig, Landgraf of Thuringia, who died in 1227 and was husband to St Elizabeth of Hungary:

He was a most cruel tyrant... When he felt death approaching, he enjoined upon his friends: “As soon as the breath has left my body, clothe me in a Cistercian cowl; but take most diligent heed

¹ P.L. CXLV, col. 300. Already by this time the temporal measurement had lost its strict arithmetical meaning. Pope Alexander II, in 1066, wrote that the confessor “is rather to observe the degree of contrition than the measure of time” (Lea, *Auricular Confession*, II, 147).

² For other expressions of the parallel between monachism and baptism see St Odo of Cluny (P.L. CXXXIII, col. 554, cf. 606-7); Busch, p. 284; Dionysius Cartusianus, *Opp.* XXXIX, 613.

that this be not done in my lifetime.”¹ They obeyed him; he died and was duly clothed. . . . When his soul was drawn forth from his body, it was brought before the Prince of the Devils, according to a plain revelation vouchsafed to a certain man. This lord of hell sat over the pit, with his goblet in his hand, and saluted the Landgraf in such words as these: “Welcome, beloved friend! show him our couches, our larder, our cellar, and then escort him back.” Then the poor wretch was led to the place of torment, where was nothing but mourning and weeping and gnashing of teeth; and, on his return, the Prince said to his fellow-prince: “Friend, drink from my cup.” He struggled hard, but without avail; perforce he must drink; and then a sulphurous flame burst forth from his eyes and ears and nostrils. Then said the Prince: “Now consider this pit of mine, whose depth is bottomless”: and, unclosing the cover, he cast him in and closed it again.

It is in the light of these facts, then, gathered from some of the most learned and pious of actual medieval writers, and of others which might be quoted in multitudes, that we must correct the kindly exaggerations of Fr. Bede Jarrett’s book on *The Religious Life*. In Chapter III he describes the purpose of that life, but rather as an ideal than as an actuality. He stresses the positive side to the practical exclusion of the negative; for him, the monk’s one motive is Love in its widest sense, including both God and our neighbour. “Without love”, he writes, “the penances, the silence and the solitude become merely inhuman and fanatical. . . . In its power [the monk] can trust himself to be led forward without hurt, and by it the horrid and frightening evil things are recognized and avoided.” This, indeed, is the ideal held out by St Thomas Aquinas; and no doubt the best monks had as lofty an aim, and came as near to it in practice as the best of other men. But the enormous majority, during the last three medieval centuries at least, are shown by their own records to have shrunk from much of the earlier ascetic burden; and they were often far from that perfect love which casteth out fear.

¹ Compare vol. I, p. 477 for the difficulties which sometimes occurred when *ad succurrendum* monks lived long enough to desire a return to their old life.

CHAPTER III

THE DONOR'S ESCAPE

JUST as the monk's sacrifice of himself was quite naturally and legitimately conditioned by his hopes of heaven and by that intense fear of hell which swayed believing souls in the Middle Ages, so we shall find the same motives at the back of the founder's or benefactor's sacrifice of worldly goods.

Here also we must not minimize the purely spiritual side. The self-sacrifice of the best monks will bear comparison with anything of its kind; and so will the sacrifice of the best donors; we may find Zacchaeus giving the half of his goods to the poor, and the widow's cruse of Zarephath, or the other widow's mite at the Temple. Hurter gives an engaging list of thirteenth-century examples in the 7th chapter of his *Tableau des Institutions*. Donors would explain: Because the abbot gave me extreme unction during my sickness—in order that the monks may help travellers and the needy—because the abbot, without horror, gave the kiss of peace to the leprous prince Ottokar of Styria—because of his kindness to me after my captivity—because I have earned my little property as carpenter to the abbey—because the monks are learned—because the corpse of my son has been found—because God has granted me no children—in memory of my dear wife (or husband)—because of what I have seen of the monks' piety. He sums up: "In the ideas of that age, a monastery was a ladder up to heaven; men's prayers were carried up from step to step to God's throne, by angels who brought back divine graces to earth." All this is true; but it is not the whole truth. Quite a considerable proportion of apparent gifts, as we shall see later, were disguised purchases. But we need to look a little more closely even into those cases in which there is no reason to suspect any such disguise.

Let us start from the foundation deed of Cluny, that abbey which rapidly grew to be greatest of all in Western Christendom, and whose five abbots between 924 and 1109 averaged 37 years of reign, while each was of noble birth and a canonized saint. I have translated this charter almost in full in *Life in the Middle*

Ages, iv, 47. Count William the Pious, a prince almost as powerful in those days as the King of France, gave this rich Burgundian manor and village in 909 for the endowment of a monastery, "willing to provide for mine own salvation while yet there is time". He trusts the monks so fully that he prescribes that they "be subject neither to Our own will nor to that of Our kinsfolk, nor to the king's most solemn majesty, nor to the yoke of any earthly power whatsoever". He adds a solemn prayer, filling a whole page, that God's curse may fall upon any man who shall diminish or change this legacy, and that it may send him to hell with the traitor Judas. This he reinforces with a clause which was possible for so great an earthly prince: "Moreover, by the laws of this world, let him be compelled by the judges to pay an hundred pounds of gold to the monks against whom he has trespassed; and, if they have consented thereunto, let this consent be null and void."¹

This has all the characters of a first foundation, where, as we should expect, the endowments generally came in a lump, and from a single donor or a small group. In England all the earliest foundations are lost in the mist of legend; but let us take Norwich, founded soon after the Conquest and therefore fully documented in its history. Bishop Herbert de Lozinga, "for the ransom of my life and for absolution from all my sins", endowed it straight, in 1094, with enough lands and rents to support "60 monks for all eternity".² A few years afterwards, he procured from Pope Paschal II a full confirmation of this gift, with a solemn curse upon any man who should infringe it: let such a man not only be deposed from whatever office or dignity he may possess, but also "let him be cut off, here on earth, from the Body and Blood of Christ our God and Lord and Redeemer, and at the Last Judgement let him be subjected to strict vengeance". So, again, we find with the next great foundation, Reading Abbey, in 1121: only here it is a king who gives the lands and threatens vengeance; and, like William, he can add worldly sanctions:

let the Judge on high shrivel him up and uproot him with all his posterity, that he may dwell in ruin and hunger without heirs of his

¹ Marrier, *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis* (1614), pp. 2 ff.

² Dugdale-Caley, iv, 15-16.

body: on the other hand, whosoever shall maintain this abbey of Reading in the liberties and possessions which we have rehearsed, may the Most High, who ruleth over all realms of men, fortify him with all goods and keep him to all eternity.¹

With considerable diffidence, I would suggest the following evolution of English foundation charters. In pre-Conquest kind, they were solemn deeds drawn up at the royal court and fortified by the presence of a large number of distinguished witnesses; they were often fortified also by elaborate ecclesiastical curses, in many different forms; a few even vary the threat of eternal fire into that of perpetual frost; *e.g.* King Athelstan in defence of Wilton nunnery: "let him suffer the chilly blasts of ice and of evil spirits."² After the Conquest, the curse is much rarer; a strong government brings more settled society, and neither the host of noble witnesses nor the Church's threats retain their former importance. By the thirteenth century, the curse has almost disappeared from the foundation charter, though it lives on in papal confirmations for all the Middle Ages. It occurs only twice (and then very briefly) in the first 22 Cistercian foundations given by Dugdale (v, 314-637); once in 1134 and once in [1200]. On the other hand, when Prince Madoc of Wales founded Valle Crucis abbey (1170, p. 637) he expressly left that side of his job to the monks themselves: "We have consented that these ecclesiastics should restrain the insolence [of any man who shall molest them] by the authority of Holy Church." Again, whereas in pre-Conquest days the earthly ruler sometimes reinforces spiritual terrors by the further sanction of an enormous fine,³ this ceases altogether under stronger Norman rule.

No more meritorious work of charity could be devised than to add one monastery more to the world: the founder constantly tells us that his sacrifice is made for the atonement of his own sins and those of his progenitors and kinsfolk; or, as a king's butler puts it in twelfth-century France, "for the redemption of

¹ Dugdale-Caley, IV, 41.

² *Ibid.* II, 321 [940].

³ *E.g.* Edgar for Westminster, Dugdale-Caley, I, 292; Ethelbald for Crowland, "£100 of legal money", *ibid.* II, 108. In Germany and Italy, where feudal anarchy was far more formidable, the prince often specifies "100 ounces of purest gold".

my soul".¹ Quite typical, again, are those sentences at the end of the thirteenth-century romance of Fulk Fitz-Warine.

And Fulk bethought him that greatly had he sinned against God by the slaying of people, and by other great misdeeds; and, to acquit him of his sins, he founded a priory . . . near Alberbury, in a wood on the river Severn, the which is called the New Abbey . . . And with great honour he was interred at the New Abbey; on whose soul may God have mercy! And the body lies nigh unto the altar.²

The same sort of story may be found in the charters or the chronicles of one monastery after another: "for the remission of my sins", "for the redemption of my soul", "for my hopes of heaven". A story of unusual interest comes from the great abbey of Vendôme.

After the foundation of the priory of Villemardy, the monks of La Trinité wished to found a new dependent cell at Périgny; the occasion seemed too favourable to be neglected. Three maiden ladies whose youth had passed, and who professed a life of piety, possessed at Périgny some lands and tithes of considerable value; these ladies, who looked back on their past with bitterness of soul, lived in great terror of God's judgements. The monks of Vendôme, their spiritual directors, sought to calm their fears and to arouse them to trust God's mercy; but all was unavailing to reassure their timorous souls. The monks found a means of contenting their own cupidity and of soothing these good ladies; let them give all their possessions to the abbey, by which means (they said) the devil would never get any hold upon them, and the deed of gift would afford a more than sufficient guarantee. The monks protested that, if this gift took place, they were so sure of their salvation that they would pledge themselves by a most solemn deed to be damned for them, and go to hell in their stead, if God would not grant them His pardon for their sins. The donation was made, accepted and signed on this condition; and the deed, which is in the archives of Périgny, runs to the effect that these three ladies give their whole possessions to the monks of La Trinité at Vendôme, for the redemption of their sins and the salvation of their souls, which they regard as assured by this gift; and the monks, accepting it, declare themselves guarantors in community, one for all and all for one, that they will be damned for the givers (without allowing speciality to except generality, or generality to hinder speciality, that is to say, for all three together or for any one of the three) if God would condemn them to eternal death: and all this in

¹ *Lib. Test.* p. 18.

² *Trans. Kemp-Welch*, p. 117.

honour of the Holy Trinity. Amen. They must have been very simple [comments Abbé Simon] to accept such a guarantee, and the others very corrupt or unlearned to propose it; after all, the guarantee was not worth the price.¹

Sometimes, however, the records show us a far less materialistic point of view.

A certain Bavarian knight, of exceeding wealth, distinguished for his hospitality and almsgiving, came to die. After death he appeared to his wife in her chamber and, when she asked him of his state, he answered in sadness "If all the leaves of all the trees were turned into tongues, they could not express my pains." To whom she made answer "What is this that thou sayest, my lord? Where are the hospitalities and alms which thou hast given to poor folk and to wayfarers?" He said, "Because I did these things not in love [*charitate*], but for the sake of praise and human glory, they have profited me nothing."²

Similarly we find a preaching friar of the [fourteenth] century explaining to his hearers that expensive tombs will not soften the pains of purgatory.³ Again, we find the author of *Piers Plowman* asking, pertinently enough, how far this sort of bargain will affect a man's eternal future. Sinners take refuge with the friars, he says, as the fraudulent trader takes sanctuary in Westminster Abbey.⁴ There, he can live on the borrowed money he had brought in, "and maketh him merry with other men's goods". Thus false executors "will give the friars a parcel [of the goods left by will] to pay for them, and [meanwhile they] make themselves merry with the residue and the remnant that other men laboured for, and suffer the dead [man] in debt until the Day of Doom".

Naturally, however, kinsfolk or heirs were not quite so keenly concerned for the donor's soul as he himself had been. The lump sum with which the monastery started was considerable enough

¹ *Hist. de Vendôme*, par l'Abbé Simon (Vendôme, 1835), III, 264.

² Caes. Heist. *Hom.* II, 78.

³ Michael de Hungaria, *Sermones predicabiles per totum annum* (Strassburg, 1490), sermon viii. Michael explains in the same sermon that a single man suffers in hell more than all the pains suffered by all men on earth since Adam.

⁴ B, x, 280. This seems the plain sense: Langland refers to that part of the precincts which still bears the name *Broad Sanctuary*, not (as Skeat explains with an inconclusive reference) to the bribing of judges at Westminster Hall.

to tempt plunder; moreover, in that medieval tangle of law and custom with regard to real property, there might be plenty of room for honest doubt as to what, in detail, the donor had actually meant to give, and as to his legal right of giving it. The story of many monasteries is a tale of struggle against heirs who disputed the founder's right to alienate; or against other claimants who asserted that the thing had never been his to give. A whole volume might be compiled from surviving records of contested donations; nay, even of donations revoked by the donors themselves. Rievaulx, in [1170], complained of spoliation not only by others but even by some of those who are recorded as chief benefactors to the abbey.¹ At St Bees also the brethren complained that their benefactors were their oppressors; so, again, at Byland in [1230]²; Imbart de la Tour supplies a similar case.³ In [1230] a nobleman's nephew was so impatient with his uncle's and aunt's legacy to the convent of St Thomas an der Kyll, that he used violence which compelled the nuns to take refuge in the neighbouring city of Trier, and the archbishop's intervention was needed to bring them back.⁴ In [950], the Abbot of St-Géraud d'Aurillac bought himself free from the encroachments of the count and of other neighbouring nobles by the sacrifice of "10,000 *mansi*, not counting the towns which he gave up".⁵

The *succurrendum* system naturally encouraged such changes of mind, if the patient unexpectedly recovered his health.⁶ It was almost equally perilous when a donation was made at the donor's last gasp, leaving actual performance to his executors. St John's College at Cambridge, even though the foundress had not delayed so long as this, would probably never have come into actual existence but for the courage and devotion of Bishop Fisher, who fought for the fulfilment of her will and may be regarded almost as the true Founder. And Dom Affarosi generalizes not too pessimistically with reference to a case which he records at his own abbey of St Prospero in about 1440.

¹ *V.C.H. Yorks*, III, 150; Fletcher, p. 102.

² *Reg. St Bees*, Surtees Soc. pp. vii, 510, 513; Fletcher, p. 112.

³ *Rev. Historique* (1898), LXVIII, 40.

⁴ Eckertz, II, 626.

⁵ Bouange, II, 457.

⁶ I give three cases in vol. I, pp. 477-8.

A neighbouring lord had encroached illegally upon the monastic possessions; but

before his death he made a will to the effect that his heirs should restore them freely to the monastery, through remorse, as he said, for not having told the truth [in the lawcourts]. Yet this just and pious disposition of his had the same fate which commonly befalls so many others which, by a common delusion, are put off until a man's last breath.¹

Or, again, the donor might have acted under a momentary impulse or pressure which need not appeal to others. Here is a charter of 1044:

By the providence of Almighty God, whereby all things have their vicissitudes, and whereby adversity is turned to prosperity and prosperity to adversity, as hath been foreordained thereby before the beginning of time, and shall ever remain to all eternity, it befel unto me, Fulco, viscount of the city of Marseilles, that I made a warlike assault upon the castles of my enemies, wherefrom darts were hurled which wounded my body. Under the pain of these wounds, and the fear of my transgressions, I have disposed to give somewhat of mine own honour to the martyr St Victor, of the abbey of Marseilles, for the love of Almighty God.

He and his wife therefore grant the third part of two villages, and the fourth of two others, "but on this condition, that I should hold them for my lifetime, but, after my death, I should yield them to be held and possessed by the abbey".² Here, again, is an almost contemporary instance from Farfa (1003). Hubert the Judge, and Benedict the Judge, with fourteen other "boni homines", including four monks and another priest, assembled

beside the bed whereon the Lord Hubert, son of the late Marquis Theobald, lay sick. And the aforesaid monks said unto the Lord Hubert: "My lord! bethink now that you hold some of the things which pertain to our abbey, in order that you may restore it, for the redemption of your soul, unto our abbey aforesaid." Then the lord Hubert bethought himself, and took a staff in his hands, and invested

¹ Vol. II, p. 54. Hurter (II, 27) points out that one cartulary notes it as an exception when endowment comes from a man in the prime of life. "Luitold Schiltperch, while he yet flourished in the flower of his age, was nevertheless touched by God's goodness and gave us a farm" (*Mon. Boic.* x, 411). For other endowments repented see Bricot, p. 54.

² *Cart. S. Vict. Marseille*, ed. Guérard (1857), I, 47.

and restored unto the aforesaid John, priest and provost [of our abbey], all that land and vineyard, whatsoever he held at that time from the abbey, with its cottages and vineyards and lands, and fruit and trees, and with all that grew above or lay beneath, without diminution.¹

A long and most significant story of endowment and repentance is told by the chronicler of St-Hubert, pp. 245-51. In 1175, Duke Godfrey of Bouillon was carried home in mortal infirmity from Italy. He sent for the Abbot of St-Hubert,

and, bursting into tears, scarce able to speak in the midst of his sobs, he made pure confession before the abbot in expectation of death; after which he bade that his sword should be brought unto him; which, in presence of his son Godfrey, and with continuous penitential groans, he offered as a present to the abbot; and with great humility—nay, rather, with pain—he called upon him to bear witness at God's judgement-day to this his renunciation of worldly warfare.

Then he caused himself to be carried into a neighbouring church, with his own ivory casket of most precious relics, inherited from the Marquis Boniface. Before the assembled people, he rehearsed how,

by edict of Pope Alexander [II], he had been separated from the Marchioness Beatrice, and, as a condition of the said separation, he was to found a congregation of monks from the possessions common to both of them.... But these possessions were almost all held in feudal service by knights; and, although these men dared not gainsay the duke openly when he withdrew the possessions from them, yet they murmured among themselves with the greatest indignation at this deed. The abbot felt that the duke's efforts were vain, marking as he did the protests of those who murmured under their breath; and noting especially, through a certain aversion of the son's countenance, that it reflected already a breach of filial duty.

He therefore declined the endowment. The duke clearly saw his reasons; and demanded of his son:

Why dost thou betray such degeneracy as to be found wanting for thy father's salvation in this his utmost necessity? Thou shouldst not make a prey for thine own guilt from the few things which I destine for the redemption of my soul, while I leave unto thee very many things which have been earned by mine own labours.

He compelled the son to promise obedience, and to confirm it with a kiss. These public professions from both sides swept away

¹ *Regesto di Farfa* (Rome, 1883), III, 125; a formal notarial record.

the abbot's hesitations; and the old duke proceeded to a solemn ceremony of investment.

"Most beloved father," he said, "by this casket of relics" (and here he gave it into his hands) "I commit unto thee the cause of this my devotion, in order that thou mayst execute it for the salvation of my soul to all eternity." Then, to his son: "To thee I commit, in the fealty which thou owest and hast promised unto thy father, the executor's duty of helping, working with, and defending this gift, according to the advice of this abbot" (whose hand he grasped and clasped within that of his son) "and this present church of St Peter the Apostle, which is of mine own patrimony, I dedicate for the perpetual occupation of monks; and its mother-church of Sensareux I confirm also to their possession, excluding altogether the clerics who have held them hitherto."

He added the promise of large gifts in gold and silver and lands, and finished with a liberal distribution among the poor. The abbot brought him back to Verdun, where he lived on for a month more; yet, though the abbot attempted to obtain confirmation from the son, this latter, even in his father's lifetime, "belied all his promises and . . . denied all recollection of whatsoever the father had directed for the redemption of his soul, even in his own presence and with his ratification". His courtiers suggested to him that he could not afford to make himself unpopular with these powerful vassals; and he thus temporized so long as the old duke still breathed. At last, on the 20th day of January, terrible thunderbolts fell from the sky; and on the morrow the duke died. Then at length the younger Godfrey showed his true self, with the result that the abbot had finally to content himself with a very disadvantageous compromise. Some time afterwards, although the abbot had been able to lay his case personally before the great Gregory VII through the favour of the almost equally eminent Countess Matilda, yet little seems really to have been gained. All we are told is that the Pope commissioned the prelates to approach Godfrey either by persuasion, or, in the last resort, with threats of ecclesiastical censure. But such threats, as we know, had been so freely used in those parts and during those years that they were rapidly beginning to lose their effect. The chronicler notes Godfrey's tragic death, away from his own country, by a murder almost as brutal as that of our own Edward II, not long afterwards

(p. 258). Not infrequently we find the founder or benefactor inserting a special clause of malediction against any heir or descendant who should frustrate his pious purposes.¹ Thus William de Warenne in his foundation-charter for Lewes [1077]: "may he incur the wrath and curse of God Almighty, and swift vengeance in heart and soul both in this world and at the Day of Doom; and may there fall upon him, from me, all the malediction which a father may lay upon evil children."²

Another cause for changes of mind with regard to endowments was sometimes found in the *oblate* system. This, in one sense, was the exact opposite of *ad succurrendum*, yet it led to much the same dangers. Children might be "offered" to monasteries long before the age of discretion; sometimes, even, in the very cradle, though this was rare, and the limit was generally put at seven.³ It was not until 1179 that a papal decree gave the oblate a legal right of deciding for himself, at 14, whether or not he would take the life-long vows; and, naturally, much was done to discourage the *not*. Some endowment had always or nearly always been offered with him; I know of no case that has ever been quoted without endowment. It will be obvious what opportunity for money quarrels was given here. Moreover, though Alexander III had forbidden the reception of children to the final vows before the age of 14, yet Innocent IV, in the days of his law lectures, showed how prettily that obstacle could be turned. He is arguing for latitude of dispensation wherever a clear case can be made out for a gain to religion; and he concludes:

It is a canonical decree that a minor of less than 14 cannot bind him [or *her*] self to Religion. But this is against natural law; for, even as a boy, from the time when he is able to distinguish good and evil,

¹ For other instances of endowments repented of, see Coesfeld, p. 28; Bricot, p. 54; Wyard, p. 418; Birch, *Neath*, p. 55; Chuzel, p. 66; Birch, *Margam*, p. 130. From almost every monastic chartulary comes evidence of endowments revoked or usurped. The editor of the Molesme chartulary points out (p. 53) that "it is certain that the territorial donations which date from the first fifty years of the abbey's existence [*i.e.* 1071-1121] were mostly violated either by the givers themselves or by their heirs, and that a large proportion of the earliest chartulary has the definite object of repairing the effects of that devouring greed, and that excess of wickedness, which are stigmatized in these contemporary preambles". The contemporary chronicle of Ordericus Vitalis gives frequent cases of this; compare, for instance, *P.L.* CLXXXVIII, cols. 430, 441, 446, 448, 847. ² Dugdale-Caley, v, 13.

³ See ch. xiv of my first volume, *Oblate Children*.

is able to bind himself to the devil [*se diabolo obligare*], in the same way also may he bind himself to God.¹

Here is rich material for a lawsuit which might easily absorb the whole value of the estate.

In any case, distinguished churchmen have left us bitter generalizations as to endowments contested. Peter of Blois, Archdeacon of Bath [1160], writing to the Abbot of St Albans, complains that

holy Religion, who is the mother of monks, is trodden nowadays under foot; her possessions are torn piecemeal and made a prey; and that which in times past was given by the devout munificence of princes is now presumptuously revoked and taken away by modern greed, not without great expense of usury.²

The Provincial Chapter of English Benedictines in 1343 repeated this complaint word for word, adding "especially in these days of ours, wherein men's wickedness increases". Therefore, abbots and priors are to beware of showing favour to any man who is known to be opposed to [*adversari*] any other monastery; and they must do their best to settle domestic quarrels without recourse to the courts of law.³

These trespasses ended sometimes in a dramatic penance. I have quoted two already elsewhere. At Ramsey, an offending lord, on his death-bed, besought pardon, promised restitution, and sent in pledge his own hair, cut from his head, to be laid on the abbey altar by his son and heir [1150]. And at Scone, in 1450, a nobleman did humble public penance, before the abbot, with a notary to draw up a formal record, for having hewn to pieces "a certain little boat called in the vulgar tongue *coble*, appertaining to the said abbot and his brethren, floating upon the lake of Blair".⁴ Here are two others, this time from Flanders. William II, Abbot of Afflighem,

built a stone house for the reception of knights; that is, of noble folk who came to the abbey either for conversion or from pious zeal...

¹ Innocent IV, f. 178a, col. 1 *ad fin.* The stricter Orders put the age higher: e.g. Innocent IV fixed 18 for the Premonstratensians (1245), "seeing that grievous scandal has sometimes followed the admission of younger postulants" (Le Paige, p. 664).

² *Ep.* xxix; *P.L.* ccvii, col. 100. Peter blames the monks' own neglect of hospitality for this general unpopularity.

³ Pantin, II, 54.

⁴ *Five Centuries of Religion*, I, 480; *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 131.

He defended the abbey's rights manfully, and humbled the lord of Asche, for the harm that he had done to Afflighem, by a penance which is memorable for all posterity. This was his penance; he was commanded to fall prostrate at the abbot's feet in the chapter-house, bare footed and bare headed, in his shirt and drawers, with a rod in his hand.

William also "increased our household prosperity in many ways", and the abbey possessed a model monk in Reinerus. But it is not without significance that, when William died in 1242, his successor "restored the regular observance, which he saw to have been gradually relaxed".¹

In 1412, Robert Carette was banished for 10 years for having, by force and by night, delivered his son and his accomplices from the prison of Waterlos, whose lords were the monks of St Bavon.

He was further condemned to make an *amende honorable* on certain specified days, and to have a painting executed for the church of Waterlos, representing the image of St Bavon, with himself kneeling before it, and an inscription showing that it has been painted as an *amende honorable* for the transgression of which he had been guilty.²

The monks, however, were not always equally successful.

Count Markgraf Albert von Meissen's father [1250] had given 3000 marks of silver to the abbey of Lauternberg. Albert quarrelled with the community, and consequently demanded the money back. The monks had no wish to restore it, yet dared not refuse. At last they decided to lay it on the altar of the Blessed Virgin, flattering themselves that their money would be protected by respect for the Mother of God. But Albert was only too glad to get it back so easily: he came and took it from the altar, *neglecta tantae custodis reverentia*, as a contemporary chronicler writes.³

The fact is that, even before this date, curses were beginning to lose such efficacy as they had ever had. The gradual change in the formulas of the chartularies is very interesting. Pope Paschal's Norwich anathema is already pale compared with that of Cluny, or of the curse in the Rochester chartulary which

¹ D'Achery, *Spicilegium* (1723), II, 778.

² Van Lokeren, pt. II, p. 104.

³ Hurter, II, 32. Hurter suggests that it is perhaps "an example unique in its kind" during the age of Innocent III; but there are numerous records of the same spirit, though less piquantly expressed.

Sterne has made famous.¹ We may wonder in face of these, as Bryce wonders over the anathema of Gregory VII, not that it was effective but that it was not more effective than history shows it to have been. All through the Middle Ages, the Popes grant bulls to favoured abbeys confirming their possessions and privileges; and these commonly end with an imprecation; but such are briefer and less lurid in their details than those earlier curses; they soften sensibly as time goes on. Honorius III, for instance, in defence of St Prospero at Reggio: "let [the trespasser] be deprived of his power and honour and dignity, and let him know that he is guilty before God's judgement-seat for the iniquity that he has perpetrated, and let him be separated from the most holy Body and Blood of God and of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, and let him find vengeance at the Last Day." Again, Martin V in 1427, for St Paul at Rome: "Let him know that he will incur the indignation of God Almighty, and of His apostles St Peter and St Paul."²

I have heard it suggested that we may treat these curses as "common form"; but I cannot feel that this will do. It is not only that we have the variations between a hell of fire and a hell of frost, but there are many others which seem most naturally explicable by the supposition that the words of the document represent, roughly, what the monks themselves would have urged in talk with peasants or citizens or aristocratic neighbours. Here, for instance, is one from Auvergne (1193):

Let those be accursed who attack the privileges and possessions of the abbey of Chaise-Dieu. Unless they hasten to repair their evil deeds, let them, as rotten members, be cut off from Christ's body by the sword of the Church. Let them be cast forth from God's house and separated from the communion of faithful folk. Let them be accursed waking and sleeping, going and resting, in their journeys and in their sojourning, in eating and in drinking. Cursed be the fruits of their lands and the fruit of their body. May they suffer helplessly the heat of the sun, until they are tormented by the flames of hell-fire, with the devil and all the damned. May they be cursed in their deeds and their thoughts; may their children become orphans and their wives widows. May their children's children, repulsed by all men, wander as beggars in exile, far from their paternal home.

¹ It may be found in T. Hearne's *Textus Roffensis*, p. 55. For a collective curse see Appendix.

² *Bull. Casin.* II, 261, 299.

May their bread be bitter and their drink more bitter still. May they be cursed with every curse of God and of man, with every curse of the Old Testament and of the New; and may they remain excommunicate and accursed until they repent and make satisfaction for their crimes and submit to the punishment of the Church.¹

It was even more effectual, perhaps, if founder and monks could fortify themselves with the vengeance not only of God Almighty but of some well-known and much-dreaded saint. The monks of St-Michel-en-l'Herm enjoyed this advantage; and they used it to the utmost in two of the charters which they inspired. As to any man who opposed these donations, "first, let him incur the wrath of God Almighty, and be pierced with the thunderbolts of St Michael and cast down into hell". Or, in the second charter, "and let St Michael, the guardian of souls, who conquered that Dragon the enemy of the human race, cast him down into the cesspool of hell-fire".² It must be remembered that, in the ordinary medieval representations of the Last Judgement, St Michael stands in the midst with balances to weigh the souls.

As time went on, it became more and more evident that such violence defeated its own purpose; and, later still, we find this confessed within the Church itself. Not only is it frequently noted that excommunication is losing its terrors, but we have a significant complaint from the Bohemian theologian, Matthias von Janow (or Parisiensis). Emphasizing the reasonable temperance of apostolic language in the New Testament, he adds:

Let our moderns, therefore, see how far they are from this; for in their mouth, as I have said, there sounds nothing but "we strictly enjoin and command"; and again, "if any man contravene this writing (and so forth) let him know that he shall incur the indignation of Almighty God and His Saints"; and "this man, henceforth and thenceforth, thenceforth and henceforth, we excommunicate and anathematize in this present writing". But they strike no terror into their subjects, nor do they take much account concerning God's commandments and the breach thereof.³

Thus it was natural that there should have been a gradual change of emphasis from spiritual to worldly weapons of defence. Already from the earliest times, secular princes had been able to

¹ Branche, *L'Auvergne au moyen âge*, I, 212.

² Luçon, I, 375, 377.

³ F. Palacky, *Die Vorläufe des Husitenthums in Böhmen* (Prag, 1869), p. 70.

supplement their curse with a more definite civil sanction, or even to dispense altogether with the religious anathema. The founder of Cluny, as we have seen, threatens an enormous fine, and insists that his lawcourts should recognize this. The great Countess Matilda of Tuscany, in 1080, substitutes the fine for the curse; a powerful bishop had done so already in [860], and the Emperor Frederick I [1160] did the same.¹ Part of the explanation may lie in this, that spiritual compulsion has one great disadvantage compared with certain forms of worldly compulsion, so that the anathema gradually paled before the growing power of the lawcourts. We find it recorded among the most solemn muniments of Oxford University that, in the modern and degenerate days of A.D. 1432, a money fine is more feared than excommunication; and at Padua, about the same time, a general amending statute was passed, to the effect that wherever the prohibition had hitherto been "under pain of perjury" (*i.e.* under spiritual pains, for perjury was not a civil offence), henceforth it shall always be interpreted "under pain of five pounds' fine and loss of vote for a year". Hence, as Dr Rashdall observes, we find a growing disposition at the universities to substitute written certificates for corporal oaths, and pecuniary penalties for spiritual terrors.² The same tendency is traceable far earlier in monastic documents; for the monks found by experience that, whereas religious threats gradually lost their force by repetition, on the other hand condemnation and fine in the lawcourts were cumulative in their effects. No purely spiritual condemnation, even at the high-water mark of papal power, could have had the same effect as royal anger, when once the King had been moved to earnest interference. After the great riot of 1272 at Norwich, when the citizens stormed and burned the cathedral monastery, the King came down and held an assize there, whereat "some [of the offenders] were hanged, and some were burned", yet, writes the monastic chronicler Oxenedes, "he took vengeance for this great crime, to some extent, though not in full".³ The great adversary of St Albans abbey, Ralph Chenduit, might indeed ride about

¹ Affarosi, 1, 394; *Cart. Autun*, pp. 68 and 74; Richard, p. 32.

² *Univ. Europe* (1895), II, 689; cf. *Munimenta Academica*, R.S. pp. 305, 314.

³ *Chronica*, R.S. p. 220.

in his swag-bellied corpulence, and boast sarcastically: "see how the monks' curses have shrivelled me up!"¹ But a few unsuccessful lawsuits would have made him sing a different tune. Therefore the great abbeyes always retained their own lawyers, or, not infrequently, produced men from among the brethren who could more than hold their own in the courts against those English legists whom Innocent III's Italian mind despised as muddle-headed beer-drinkers.²

¹ M. Paris, *Chron. Maj.* iv, 262.

² *Chron. Evesh.* R.S. p. 189.

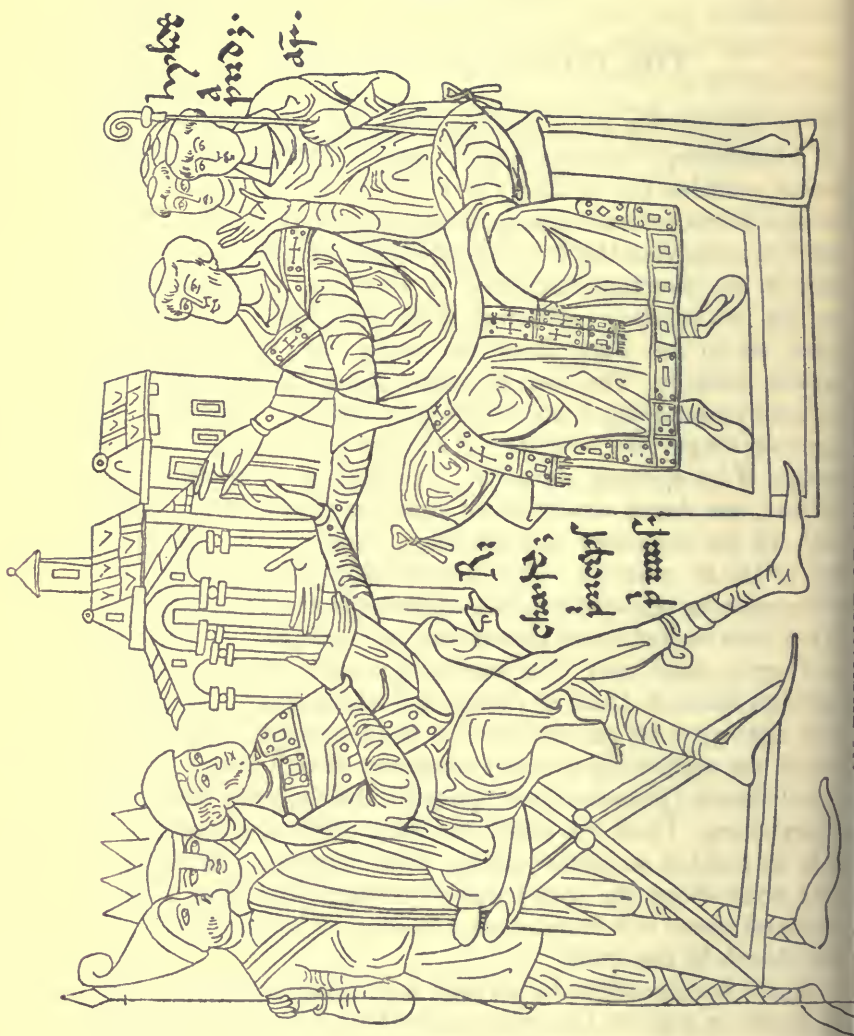
CHAPTER IV

THE PRIVILEGE OF BURIAL

THE founder was generally alive during the first few years of a monastery's existence; and he employed the most efficient means available for securing his donation. In the earlier days, though documentary evidence was not neglected, great care was taken to strengthen this by public notoriety. We have an analogy here in the marriage ceremony, of which the legally binding portion was regularly performed, down to the end of the Middle Ages, not in the church itself, but at the door, for the sake of greater publicity. The same principle, again, is involved in that ceremony round which one of the great conflicts of the Middle Ages was fought; the investiture of a prelate with ring and crosier, in sign of his spiritual authority. So, again, in the transference of land, the donor would often come and lay upon the altar, with all due solemnity and publicity, a sod or a branch from the estate in question. This is admirably illustrated by the accompanying reproduction of a miniature from Monte Cassino. It has been worked by the illuminator upon a charter of St Angelo in Formis, dated 1165. The document records a legal exchange between Richard, Duke of Capua, and Archbishop Ildeprando. The duke gives his palace church of San Giovanni, in return for which the archbishop grants a mountain church with two decayed chapels [*jam vetustate consumptis*], and the lands thereunto appertaining. Upon this estate the Abbot of Monte Cassino was able to build a monastery which soon counted 40 brethren.¹ The artist shows the transaction in concrete form, just as the medieval statue of a founder often bore in its hands a model of the church he had built.

Again, *traditio* might be through a personal possession such as a knife or a glove. This still survives in the shape of the Bible which the bishop gives to the deacon at his ordination, and the cap which is formally placed on the head of recipients of university degrees. In Scotland, a regular form of taking "corporal

¹ Tosti, I, 400; *Chron. Casin.* lib. III, c. 37.



possession" was the transference of earth and a stone from the property concerned.¹ King Alexander I of Scotland, when he granted Boar's Chase to St Andrews priory, gave publicly his own Arab charger and costly armour, which was shown there for generations in token of the gift.² Alberic de Vere, who founded Hatfield Broadoak priory in 1135, by way of seal to a charter tied his own knife to it with a harp-string.³ Sometimes several of the ordinary formalities were cumulated: *e.g.* in 1018 a donation was confirmed in Piedmont "by handing over a knife, a twig tied into a knot, a glove and a sod of the land and a branch of a tree". A French noble, "by placing the lappet of his mantle in the hands of lord William our prior" (1112).⁴ Another, in token of his gift, laid a text of the Gospels on the altar. The Abbot of Hastier, convicted in 1075 by a local assembly of trying to remove the landmarks of the neighbouring abbey of St-Hubert, "rose up and pledged himself to do justice to Abbot Theodoric [of St-Hubert], by delivering to him the sleeve of his own tunic".⁵ When a dependent church was appropriated to the monks of St-Martin at Autun, the incumbent "according to symbolic use, handed over to them the ropes of the bells, which they then rang".⁶

Ponce, Count of Toulouse, in 1045, gave an endowment to the abbey of Moissac, and (we read in the cartulary) "in sign of this grant he cut his thumbnail to the quick, so that blood came forth as a memorial of this deed".

Perhaps, again, the giver would appeal to the public memory, and especially to that of those who were likely to live longest, impressing them by one of the two opposite but equally effective methods of pleasure or displeasure. For instance, we find cherries cast abroad for all the children of the place to scramble for, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*.⁷ In another case, the monastic

¹ See *Scottish Abbays*, p. 61, for concrete examples.

² *Ibid.* p. 60.

³ Dugdale-Caley, IV, 432.

⁴ Mabillon, *Ann. O.S.B.* lib. LIV, § 58; lib. LXXII, § 41. The next two cases come from the same work, lib. LVIII, § 85 and vol. v, Appendix, § 50.

⁵ *Per manicam tunicae suae*; St-Hubert, p. 244. The sleeve was sometimes made so long as to cover the hands, and this passage suggests a detachable continuation, which again is borne out by the fact that *manica* is often used as equivalent for *glove*.

⁶ Bulliot, p. 329.

⁷ For this and the Troarn incident, see my *Medieval Village*, p. 73.

charter records how "the young witnesses demanded the customary guerdon in remembrance and commemoration of this deed; wherefore Drogo threw them a penny". In another case the donor "went to the houses of each [of his relations] in turn (for they had many little children), and obtained the assent of all in so far as they could speak, . . . and to these children 6 pennies were distributed for a remembrance".¹ When Guillaume, lord of Talmont, founded there the abbey of Ste-Croix, he took every pains to fortify his donation by personal publicity. In his own words,

calling together all my barons whom I had brought from divers regions, I besought them earnestly to augment this church. . . . They acclaimed my words; and then I caused all the children of my principal folk, both infants and boys and youths, both small and full-grown, to be called together in presence of their fathers. . . . Of this my donation there are almost as many witnesses as inhabitants were to be found in the district of Talmont; yet, lest my posterity, neglecting my salvation and their own, ignoring past events and led by greed, should some day presume to infringe this donation, therefore I commend it to writing and to memory.²

Or, again, the opposite treatment was often adopted as equally effective for practical purposes, and homage was paid to the old Frankish law, "let each of the child-witnesses receive a slap and have his ears pulled"; a principle which is sometimes perpetuated even to-day, if only symbolically, by the whipping of a boy at the "beating of the bounds". In [1030], Humphrey de Vieilles founded a monastery at Préaux in Normandy. The founder laid his endowments symbolically upon the altar in the presence of Duke Robert's son, the future William the Conqueror, and of his own two sons, one of whom

received a blow on the cheek from his father for memory's sake. Another blow was given to Richard de Lillebonne, who bore Duke Robert's wine; and, when he asked why Humphrey had given him a prodigious buffet, the latter answered: "For that thou art younger than I, and perchance thou wilt live long and bear witness to this fact when need shall arise." A third buffet was bestowed upon Hugh, son of Count Waleran.³

¹ *Cart. St-Père*, ccxxiii.

² *Luçon*, 1, 381.

³ *Ann. O.S.B.* lib. LVII, § 35. For Benvenuto Cellini's boyish experience, see Appendix.

In another instance, we even find a Norman count who confirms a donation to the abbey of Troarn by throwing his young son publicly into the river, clad in his best fur mantle.¹ In this particular case, as Ordericus Vitalis shows, a psychological complex was created in the boy's mind which the monks of later years had reason to regret: he grew up into a typical violator of monastic privileges. Castleacre in Norfolk, about A.D. 1150, received 40 acres of land from five brothers, apparently peasants, by a bargain which seems to have been partly gift, partly sale. Each of these men pledged his oath on the holy gospels in Castleacre chapter-house; and each, as he swore, bit the wax that hung from the deed, that the impression of his teeth might serve as a seal.² Sir Aurel Stein has recently taught us how, in China, as early as A.D. 782, it was habitual to vouch deeds with finger-prints in lieu of seal. We may well suppose that these men felt the Recording Angel to have more definite evidence against them, in case of perjury, than if he had their mere seal, while the legal evidence would be equally strong. But naturally enough, as society became more cultivated, written documents became proportionally more numerous and more trustworthy. If, as a matter of fact, tradition played so great a part in early medieval history, as compared with the written word, this was less from choice than from necessity. That strong revival of civilization which began roughly about the year 1000, and which is really comparable to the later Renaissance, was accompanied, among other things, by methodical transference from oral to written testimony. Already before this, different tribes had marked their advance in culture by committing their customary laws to parchment; and, as time went on, even the manorial officials were no longer content to rely entirely upon oral tradition. But it is perhaps in monastic history that the change is clearest and most explicit. We find the principle enunciated at least as early as 790, when Ethelbert appeals to it briefly in a charter to the convent of Rochester. But gradually it is elaborated at greater length; thus, for instance, in the preamble to a French charter of 1109.

Since we see daily how that which hath been decreed by our fathers before us is being dissolved, and how the things which seemed to

¹ Sauvage, *Troarn*, 256.

² Blomefield's *Norfolk* (1808), ix, 5 (Gt Massingham).

stand most firmly in this world are now either already fallen or are threatening ruin; and, what is more, mere words vanish into smoke almost at the moment wherein they are spoken, therefore we have taken care to enshrine in the tenacious memory of written letters—and then follows the gist of the document.¹ I have counted eight other preambles of the same kind in this one chartulary, beginning in 1031 with “man is a forgetful animal [*homo est obliviosum animal*]... unless things be written down in ink”.

These explicit apologies, as we may call them, become less and less frequent; it was increasingly taken for granted that whatsoever was worthy of accurate record must be put down in plain black and white. Yet we still find Innocent III thinking it worth while to remind a monastery of this principle;² and Hurter has quoted two other cases of the same date.³ Indeed, as late as Chaucer's time or a few years after, the celebrated city clerk of London, John Carpenter, gave this same reason for the trouble he took with his records. For, after all, this is a matter of plain common sense; and medieval sense agreed with modern in preferring the written word to oral tradition, wherever there was any real choice between the two.⁴ Indeed, the preference of oral to written tradition in Christianity would seem itself to be an unprimitive tradition, due to the exigences of ecclesiastical apologetics. St Chrysostom urged the laity strongly to read the Bible for themselves, as indeed the Greek laity were able to do. In the West, however, the Bible soon became unintelligible to layfolk; and the priests were able to substitute, unchecked, an oral tradition on some of the most important points. It is noteworthy that this exaggeration of oral tradition was one of Newman's most important Romeward steps.⁵

We have seen how easily the *succurrendum* and *oblato* systems lent themselves to business misunderstandings. An even more dangerous source of monastic revenues, if only because it was incomparably more frequent and richer, was in the right of

¹ *Chronique de St-Pierre de Bèze (Analecta Divionensia, Dijon, 1875),* p. 416; cf. pp. 318, 327, 427, 458, 470, 475, 489, 491.

² Inn. III, *Regest.* lib. x, no. 145 (*P.L.* ccxv, col. 1243).

³ F. Hurter, *Gesch. Papst. Inn. III* (1843), III, 481. For further evidence as to the superiority of writing to tradition see Appendix.

⁴ An admirable page on the value of tradition in medieval life may be found in M. Bloch, *Caractères originaux de la vie rurale*, p. 73.

⁵ *The Times*, Feb. 25, 1935, p. 14, col. 1.

burial within the monastic precincts; or, in specially favoured cases, even in the church or chapter-house.

The frequent litigation to which these monastic burials gave rise would testify to their great economic importance, even in default of other evidence; but in fact we have a mass of corroborative testimony. In a large number of documents, considerable endowments are specifically bound up with the reception of the corpse. And, even in the simplest cases, those who received the body had, *ipso facto*, a claim upon all the *spolia*;¹ i.e. the traditional perquisites, such as the knight's war horse which was led in the procession, and his armour, and the silks or brocades that covered the bier. The legal importance of this subject of burial perquisites is shown by the fact that it occupies so much space in each successive compilation of Papal Decretals. As early as A.D. 1052, Leo IX issued an emphatic prohibition against monks who sought to divide the unity of the Church, by robbing the parish of the corpses and the legacies of "such secular folk as they are able to ensnare" (*seculares, quos illequare possint*). This decree was finally embodied in Canon Law, with similar decrees of Alexander III and Innocent III, and other Popes verging on the year 1200. A century later, Boniface VIII decrees in even stronger words; he is determined (he tells us) to fight against "the perils to souls and the scandals which oftentimes arise" from these questions of burials and money. Then, Benedict XI having revoked Boniface's decree, Benedict XII lamented that this revocation had unfortunately aggravated the evil; and that the Devil, ever busy to sow tares, was now reaping no small advantage from this burial quarrel. And when, in the early sixteenth century, the canonist Chappuis printed the so-called *Extravagantes Communes* as a supplement to the preceding collections of decretals, he incorporated one other decree of Boniface VIII in reprobation of the grisly materialism which sometimes resulted from this treatment of burial as a matter of business. (See full text on p. 62.) It is true that, in this particular decretal, there is no explicit mention of the economic nexus between burial in one chosen church and the endowment of that church, yet Chappuis

¹ For this system see Thomassinus, pars III, lib. ii, c. 51 ff. (pp. 441 ff.).

follows it up by repeating another decretal of Boniface, revived by Benedict XII, which lays great stress on that nexus as the main cause of quarrel.¹ We shall see that St Thomas Aquinas's flesh had recently been thus boiled away from his bones for convenience of transportation; and King Louis of Naples had vainly offered 15,000 florins for the box which contained them.² Moreover, where not saints but ordinary folk are concerned, we have concrete instances for the extent to which the corpse's market value outweighed any consideration for these bones and flesh as the mortal remains of a departed benefactor. The monks of Selborne, whose lands belong now to Magdalen College, Oxford, claimed in 1274 "that the body of Joan called le Foke, buried at Gretham, be dug up, and her body or bones with the offerings and obventions be restored to them".³ Councils, as well as Popes, legislated on this burning question; that of London, for instance, in 1102 forbade the removal of corpses from their own parish, to the fraud of the local dues.⁴

Meanwhile, however, what the Popes withdrew with one hand they practically granted with the other. It was the privileges which they bestowed on these monasteries which did most to perpetuate the quarrels between regular and secular clergy; between the monk or friar and the parish priest. One of the commonest items in the papal privileges granted to any Order or to any great monastery is this, that they shall be free to accept bodies for burial. Sometimes, it is true, provision is made for a *portio congrua*, a reasonable allowance to the parish priest. Yet, even here, it was not the priest who decided what was reasonable, nor had he the best chance of success whenever opinions differed.⁵

It will be noted that the earliest of these decretals about burial coincide with a period of great prosperity and popularity for the older Orders, especially for those reformed Benedictine congre-

¹ *Decret. Greg.* lib. III, tit. 28; *Sext.* lib. III, tit. 12; *Clement*, lib. III, tit. 7; *Extrav. Comm.* lib. III, tit. 6. Compare the Synod of Dublin in 1348 (Wilkins, II, 747).

² See Appendix.

³ Macray, *Selborne*, p. 65.

⁴ Thomassinus, pars III, lib. i, c. 68, § 6 (p. 255; cf. p. 257).

⁵ Giraldus Cambrensis criticizes the Welsh monks for their systematic robbery of parishes through this attraction of rich folks' corpses and funeral offerings (*Opera*, IV, 177; cf. pp. 195-205).

gations, the Cluniacs and Cistercians. These last had begun in great poverty and self-denial; yet so rapid was their growth in riches that at Clairvaux, in its days of greatest economic prosperity, the layfolks' burial ground earned the title *Cemetery of the nobles*.¹ The Bohemian Cistercians of Waldsassen, in 1306, built a burial chapel for benefactors which they called *Paradise*; "they undertook to fetch corpses from long distances, even 10 [German] miles. Numerous deeds of gift to the monastery, sometimes considerable, were made in return for these burials."² Even women's corpses were finally accepted; yet these, in earlier days, had been explicitly prohibited; the objection being, of course, to the concourse of layfolk of both sexes which would be brought into the monastery by the funeral.³ This transition may be marked by the comments of a visiting abbot at the Cistercian house of Engelzell in 1343. He forbids emphatically the admission of women in general to the monastic precincts, but adds: "unless there come a solemn funeral, with powerful ladies who wish to be present at the burial, since it is not right to exclude such folk as this, knowing as we do that they have contributed liberal benefactions to this monastery at the prompting of their devotion".⁴

And, even as the earliest decretals on this subject are borne out by the documents of the older Orders, so we must read the second group, from Boniface onwards, in the light of what is recorded concerning the Mendicant Orders. In spite of all that St Francis had done, and the other Friars after his example, to make poverty honourable, the actual records of the later Middle Ages suggest that rank and wealth enjoyed at least as much power and consideration then as rank and wealth enjoy

¹ D'Arbois, p. 44.

² Oefele, I, 68 b: This *Paradisus* was probably the narthex, or western vestibule of the monastic church. Muggenthaler, p. 63.

³ Cf. *Five Centuries of Religion*, I, 388, 400-1, 480; and also *History*, an. 1924, p. 266 and April, p. 3. Compare the description of the Countess of Warwick's funeral in Tewkesbury Abbey about 1450 (Dugdale-Caley, I, 63).

⁴ *Studien und Mittheilungen* (1900), XXI, 123. In 1099, a rich man gave 10 parish churches and two manors to the Cluniac house of St-Martin-des-Champs; "and he laid [the token of] his gift upon the altar, in the presence of Louis, King designate of France, and of the whole congregation of monks, on the same day whereon his wife was buried with due honours, under the great Crucifix in the porch" (*Lib. Test.* p. 32).

to-day. This will come out more and more plainly in the later chapters of this volume. The earliest friars were, of course, really devoted to poverty, and had no difficulty in passing self-denying ordinances. In 1250, the Dominican Chapter General held at London decreed "that sepulchres be not made in our churches".¹ But, soon, the enormous popularity and extension of the friars led to even bitterer rivalry and friction with the parish clergy than had ever arisen from Benedictine foundations or revivals. To this friction both Boniface VIII and Benedict XII explicitly refer; the devil (they write) has fomented grievous and perilous discord between the mendicants and the parish priests. This lends additional point to the satirist's complaint: "Friars flock round the rich man's bed, and cease not until they have buried him: but none of them will go to a poor man's funeral."² The author of *Piers Plowman* voiced a similar complaint:

How that folk followed folk that was rich,
And folk that was poor at little price they set,
And no corpse in their kirkyard nor in their kirk was buried
But quick he bequeath them aught, or should help quit their debts.³

A distinguished Franciscan confessor and bishop-suffragan, Alvarus Pelagius (1335), condemns the abuse of burial-hunting among Religious without distinction of Order.

These are the men who, having died unto the world, have literally come back to bury the dead of this world: and such men, lying spiritually dead in their sins, bury others who are dead in the body. And their care is concerning the dead, that they may feed upon their corpses as wolves and dogs feed upon the carrion of beasts; many have buried themselves in hell for the sake of [lucrative] sepultures.⁴

¹ *Act. Cap. Gen.* III, 53.

² Höfler, 54.

³ B, XIII, 7.

⁴ *De Planctu Ecclesiae*, f. 177 a. A communication from Sir George Warner of the British Museum, though not directly relevant, may throw an interesting cross-light on this subject. He writes to *The Times* (Jan. 29, 1935): "In connexion with recent correspondence on the subject of horse-skulls in churches, instances of the whole bodies of horses being interred within churches in the Middle Ages are not unknown. Thus one, Thomas of Macclesfield, in his will dated in 1303, directed that his best horse (*meliozem equum meum*) should be buried with him in the parish church before the altar of the Blessed Virgin (Brit. Mus., Add. Ch., 37,249); and that this was done may be inferred from the fact that a similar direction, except that it included the saddle and bridle, was given by Jordan of Macclesfield, his son, in 1356 (Add. Ch., 37,269)."

Equally plain-spoken criticism comes from monks of the older Orders, whose own past successes were eclipsed by this present popularity of their younger rivals. Walsingham, the St Albans chronicler, thus records the death of Queen Eleanor in 1292 at Amesbury. The Benedictine nuns (he writes) got her body, "but her head was buried at London in the church of Friars Minor, who (even as all the other Orders of Friars) claimed for themselves somewhat of the body of any great folk who died; like dogs at a corpse, where each is in greedy expectation of his own gobbet to devour".¹ Finally, let us hear a secular priest of the greatest distinction, Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, in his collection of anecdotes for preachers.²

I have heard of a certain knight who said, when he met a crowd of monks carrying a usurer's corpse to burial, "I grant you my spider's body, and let the devil have his soul: but I have his cobweb, that is, all his money." . . . I have heard also of a certain usurer, from whom the monks had taken a great sum of money that they might bury him in their church. When the monks were at their matins, the usurer arose from his tomb and, seizing a candlestick, fell like a madman upon them. As they fled in amazement and fear he wounded some in the head, brake others' legs and arms, and cried like a howling beast: "These enemies of God and traitors took my money and promised me salvation: and lo! I have been deceived by them and have found everlasting death."

Nothing shows more clearly the extent to which this commercialism of burials gradually spread through the whole monastic field, than the brethren's own records. The monks of Molesme, from whom Cîteaux sprang, began by recognizing that this admission of outsiders to burial in their churches was contrary to the true Benedictine spirit.³ Yet Molesme itself had not been founded forty years when it received the revenues of two parish churches in perpetuity as the price of admitting a bishop to burial. About the same time, they granted burial to the lady of Ricey, and the lord gave even richer endowments,

¹ Dugdale-Caley, II, 334.

² Ed. Crane (1890), 74. We must make allowance for the popular preacher; but there is deep significance in the fact that, for nine or ten generations before the Reformation, popular audiences heard this sort of anecdote from the pulpit.

³ *Cartulaire de Molesme*, I, 118, 138; II, 204, 211 (about A.D. 1110).

including two bondwomen and the children of one of them.¹ When Cîteaux was founded, the earliest Cistercian *Institutes of the General Chapter* (§ 9) forbade the reception of "churches, altar-rents, burials, tithes of other men's labours or livestock, villis, serfs, ground-rents, incomes from ovens and mills, and other like revenues which are contrary to monastic purity". In § 27, again, "we receive no stranger to burial beyond our guests and hired servants if they die within the monastery". But the *Institutions* [1240] enact, "let none be buried in our greater churches but kings, queens, and bishops"; a significant relaxation. Moreover, about half a century later, the *Liber Antiquarum Definitionum* seems to contemplate the burial of others in the cloister, though not in the church.² So also with the Friars. The Franciscan Gilbert of Tournai, in 1274, counted it among the most necessary of Church reforms that "the friars... should not fallaciously induce dying folk to be buried in their convents".³ Especially the Spiritual Franciscans deplored the "horrible peril of simony" into which their relaxed brethren fell by thriving upon burial-presents and by undertaking memorial Masses "for the sake of acquiring pittances to themselves".⁴ One of the great spiritual leaders, Ubertino da Casale [1300], quoted a very gross case from his own experience; and his contemporary Franciscan Bozon complained that usurers were now buried before the High Altar.⁵ So inevitable was this cash nexus that even the reformed Clarisses of Ste-Colette found themselves involved in it. In 1528, at Auxonne, a serious quarrel broke out between them and the parish clergy, although these Clarisses were among the most truly religious of their day and, in this particular case, their confessor renounced all claim to pecuniary profit.⁶ Wherever a monastic church has come down to us comparatively untouched by the vandalism of the Reformation, or by what has perhaps been still more destructive, the reconstructions and alterations of the Counter-Reformation, it will be found far richer in monuments to the great folk of the district than any secular

¹ *Cartulaire de Molesme*, I, 118, 138; II, 204, 211 (about A.D. 1110).

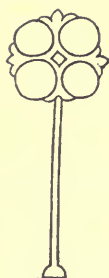
² *Nomasticon Cisterciense*, pp. 214, 218, 452.

³ *A.F.H.* (1931), xxiv, 18.

⁴ *Archiv*, II, 297-8.

⁵ *A.L.K.G.* III, 107; Bozon, ed. Toulmin Smith, p. 35. See Appendix.

⁶ Bizouard, p. 153.



Lancharre Tombstones (arranged for illustration)

church, with the possible occasional exception of cathedrals.¹ We may put aside great royal burying-places such as St-Denis, to whose tombs a whole volume has been consecrated, or Westminster or Dunfermline. Apart from these, we have record of more than 300 great folk buried in the Franciscan church at Vienna: the list fills eight quarto pages, and the next 50 pages are filled with the elaborate blazonry of these men's coats of arms.² Concerning the Grey Friars of London, Weever writes:

This Abbey Church hath beene honoured with the sepulture of foure Queenes, foure Dutchesses, foure Countesses, one Duke, two Earles, eight Barons, and some thirty-five knights; whose names are set downe by Stow in his Survey of this honourable Citie; and in all, from the first foundation unto the dissolution, sixe hundred sixtie and three persons of Qualitie were here interred. In the Quire were nine Tombes of Alabaster and Marble, inuironed with barres or strikes of iron: one Tombe in the body of the Church, coped also with iron, and with seauenscore gravestones of Marble in diuers places; all which were pulled downe, taken away, and sold for fiftie pounds, or thereabouts, by Sir Martin Bowes, Maior of London, An. 1545.³

The Franciscan church at Cologne, with its many memorial hatchments of the dead, gave the impression of a knightly church.⁴

It is a Dominican church, again, which the author of *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* describes. Here are windows blazoned with knights' shields and wealthy merchants' marks, "there is no herald that hath half such a role". And, beneath them, the tombs under lofty tabernacle-work, wrought of alabaster and marble; knights in their cognizances, as demure as saints, "and lovely ladies lien by their sides, in many gay garments that were goldbeaten".⁵

¹ The accompanying illustration gives some of the still surviving monuments to benefactors in the comparatively modest priory church of Lancharre in Burgundy, taken from J. Martin's monograph (Mâcon, 1905).

² *M.G.H. Necrologia*, IV. See also indexes to all the volumes of this series, under the words *sepulcrum*, *sepultura*, etc.

³ *Collectanea Top. et Geneal.* v, 275; see also in Appendix.

⁴ Aloys Schulte, in *Sitzungsb. d. Bayer. Akad.* (1909), Phil.-Hist. no. 8, p. 48.

⁵ *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, lines 175 ff. In the light of a very modern controversy as to pronunciations it may be noted that the next lines describe the "*kundites* (conduits) of clene tin" through which water was brought to the cloister fountain. For the strict distinction of classes in many German churchyards, monastic or non-monastic, see K. Frölich in *Zeitsch. d. Savigny-Stiftung* (1933), Kan. Abth. xxii, 257 ff.

A knight's funeral was often a striking scene. The Cistercians of Bonnevaux, for instance, received the corpse of Guignes de Beauvoir into his family tomb in 1333. "He left 100 *livres* to the monastery, and ordered that, on the day of his burial, his best charger and his best rouncy were to be brought to the church, together with his best suit of armour, and the whole sold to pay for Masses."¹ Yet "man is a forgetful animal"; and, after all this pomp and ceremony, many tombstones of pious donors, long before the Dissolution, had found their way to base uses. I have given many examples of this in *Art and the Reformation*, Chapter XXII; and at Hulton Abbey (Staffs) seven fine memorial slabs had actually been used to build a drain from the kitchen.²

But the economic advantages of these burial-rights were even greater than the honour. Bicester Priory, not a very large house, found it worth while in 1425 to spend £16 15s. 9d. on a lawsuit for this claim against the recalcitrant parishioners of a single appropriated church, Stratton.³ Even a serf's corpse might have its market value.⁴ Canon Henry (p. 215) counts burials among the three main sources of revenue at St-Germain-d'Auxerre. The historian of St-Martin at Autun bears similar witness for his abbey, and emphasizes the significance of the fact that burials became rarer and rarer in proportion as monastic fervour cooled and revenues decreased through mismanagement.⁵ In the palmy days, these windfalls by burial were sometimes enormous.⁶ Newbattle Abbey acquired the whole Vale of Lethan for the sepulture of one Queen of Scotland, and Balmerino as much or more for another. Richard II and his queen endowed Westminster with £200 a year and Henry V with £100. About the same time, a Bishop of Salisbury, buried in the abbey, gave the monks £1040.⁷ Sir Allan Mortimer at Inchcolm bought the privilege at the price of half his estate

¹ Chuzel, p. 107.

² *Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.* (1885), XLI, 69. See figure and full quotation in Appendix.

³ Kennett, *Parochial Antiquities*, II, 258.

⁴ *Lib. Test.* pp. 39, 116.

⁵ Bulliot, pp. 284-5.

⁶ References for these cases, where not given here, will be found in the Appendix, or in my *Scottish Abbeys*, pp. 63 ff.

⁷ Widmore, pp. 109, 113.

(1216). So did Bernard de Sovièze about the same time with a French abbey.¹ Walter, surnamed *le Diable*, hoped to redeem his surname by burial at the abbey of Vendôme, for which (and for those of his parents) he gave "all his goods, fiefs, lordship and other possessions, such as they might be on the day of his death".² Churches were not infrequently given on these occasions; even two or three parishes at a time might find their revenues thus suddenly reduced by 66 per cent., as we shall see later on. Pershore Abbey, in process of time, absorbed the burial-fees from 35 neighbouring churches and chapels.³

With all this pecuniary temptation, it is not to be wondered that trespasses and quarrels should have been frequent. Innocent IV, in 1254, published a bull in condemnation of Religious who haunt sick-beds like vultures; he prescribed elaborate precautions against such practices. Yet, a century later, a few weeks before the Black Death, the Synod of Dublin found the abuse so prevalent that it actually commanded the parish clergy to fight against it from their pulpits.⁴ And, in fact, medieval records supply many concrete cases. Some may be quoted here; others will be found in my Appendix.

In 1105, such was the contention between the abbey of St-Martin at Tournai and the canons of the cathedral concerning these burial-rights that "men saw not only civil war, but more than civil war, waged between the two churches": the cathedral canons, even after papal intervention, "began again to ravage us with fire, and to hire soldiers for plundering our possessions".⁵ The great abbeys of St Bavon and St Peter at Ghent had a long-standing quarrel about burial-rights, which was finally decided in 1170 by the arbitral sentence of three brother-abbots, confirmed by Pope Alexander III.⁶ Here, again, is an English example from the pen of a Canterbury monk. Peter de Mildestede, vicar of Faversham, unmindful of his oath of fealty to his

¹ Hurter, II, 31.

² *Vendôme*, III, 242.

³ Dugdale-Caley, II, 420.

⁴ Finke, *Dominikanerbriefe*, p. 77; Wilkins, *Concilia*, II, 747, § 4: see Appendix.

⁵ De Smet, II, ii, 557-9.

⁶ Van Lokeren, pt. I, p. 76. For one of the longest and most desperate medieval quarrels over corpse-rights, between the monks of Morigny and the canons of Étampes, see Duchesne, *Hist. Franc. Scriptores*, pp. 367 ff. I give long extracts in my Appendix.

rector—*i.e.* to St Augustine's abbey—had formed a habit of serving in adjacent churches and attracting Faversham folk to such "celebrations, or rather profanations...to the great prejudice and damage of the abbot and of his own church of Faversham". At last

it befel that a certain parishioner of this church had died and lay on his bier, whom the said vicar, with his accomplices, had plotted to bury, to our prejudice, at Preston outside the parish of Faversham. Therefore the monks of St Augustine's and other priests, taking clerics and layfolk with them, came to the dead man's house with due gentleness in order to perform the burial service; and, finding the body of the said dead man closed in a coffin and laid upon a bier, they offered themselves as ready to celebrate a funeral service for him on the spot. But behold! Thomas Everard, mayor of the said town, and almost the whole population of both sexes, with swords and spears and staves and axes and stones and other arms of divers kinds, made an onset upon the said monks and priests and clerks, unarmed, as they went towards the church with the corpse and bier. They strove to seize the coffin and to withdraw it from its due sepulture; moreover, some of them, in the public street, smote both monks and clerics on the head and arms and body, wounding them atrociously, and overwhelmed them with stones, not without enormous effusion of blood. Yea, and, not content with these misdeeds, the said mayor with the greater part of the inhabitants plotted with devilish impulse to destroy by fire or in some other lawless fashion the aforesaid church of Faversham and its rectory-house; wherefore the squires and serjeants of the abbey were despatched to repress the malice of these evildoers, and to defend the church and rectory. Thereupon the mayor and his accomplices, by voice and with the sound of the horn, proclaimed forthwith an assembly of the whole township, both men and women, and made assault upon the aforesaid monks and squires and clerics and layfolk, setting upon them in battle with swords and bows and other manner of arms, in great multitudes both from the town itself and from the country around. Some of them they left half dead; others they wickedly wounded; others they lacerated, and for a long time they kept priests and clerics and layfolk, like common thieves, in bonds and chains; others again they robbed of their garments and money and other goods, and left senseless in the public roads. And, adding to these iniquities, they took unto themselves this Peter de Mildestede, perjured and excommunicate, the ringleader of this whole crime, who, with his accomplices, rashly and sacrilegiously burst into the church and its adjacent buildings, broke gates and doors, climbed the tower and cut the bellropes,

severed with their swords the beams that supported them, carried off maliciously the church ornaments with the priest's and deacon's vestments; and the deacon himself they beat.¹

The same chronicler tells us of a long and desperate quarrel at Canterbury between the monks of Christchurch and of St Augustine's for the possession of archiepiscopal corpses.² And when, in 1240, the porter of the cathedral priory at Canterbury left his body by will to be buried at St Augustine's, the quarrel over this corpse was serious enough to occupy the attention of the papal legate, by whose final award no tenant of either monastery was to be received by the other "to the cowl" (no doubt, *ad succurrendum*) or for burial, except by explicit permission.³ Again, in 1245, a solemn composition was made for the burials at Ospringe.

The Augustinian of Dunstable narrates, under the year 1282: "A certain woman of St Giles's church in Dunstable died and was buried among the Friars Preachers. Her body was brought first to our church; we celebrated Mass and took the oblation and eight wax tapers; two of these our sacristan gave to the friars and two to the nuns, and kept all the rest."⁴ At Exeter, in 1301, a quarrel began which lasted till 1305, between the Dominicans and the canons of the cathedral. The corpse was that of Sir Henry Raleigh. Each party accused the other of illegal violence; and in each case the accusation seems to have been true. The result was (in the words of the sixteenth-century historian) that "by means of this quarrel the said corps lay so longe unburied that it stanke".⁵ The five years' quarrel between the friars and the parish clergy at Strassburg (1451) led to the same public scandal of putrefying corpses.⁶ The Worcester chronicler gives us two examples from his own cathedral city. He writes: "Our

¹ Thorne, c. xxxi, § 4 (Twysden, col. 1980). The immediate consequences of this riot are not recorded; but, two years later, Edward I amerced them 500 marks for trespasses done to the king: they were allowed to pay this in instalments of £20 and £15 at a time. "The largeness of the fine was not laid in respect of the wealth of the place, but of the enormity of the crimes" (Hasted's *Kent* (1782), II, 709).

² Thorne, c. III, §§ 7, 8 (Twysden, cols. 1772 ff.).

³ *Ibid.* c. xxi, § 11 (Twysden, col. 1885).

⁴ *Ann. Monastici*, R.S. III, 289.

⁵ *The Franciscans and Dominicans of Exeter*, by A. G. Little and R. C. Easterling (Exeter, 1927), pp. 40 ff., 66 ff.

⁶ See Appendix.

sacristan obtained forcibly, in spite of the resistance of many Friars Minor, the body of a certain citizen of Worcester, H. Poche by name; and he committed it to the grave in our cemetery." Next year, 1290,

archiepiscopal letters came to our bishop, bidding him dig up the body of H. Poche and give him for burial to the friars; otherwise he must cite our prior and the brethren to appear before him [at a certain date] wheresoever he might be, together with those who laid violent hands on the friars. On St James's eve the bishop himself undertook the inquisition, and found by the oath of clergy and layfolk that the dead man's last wish was to be buried in our cemetery, and that no man touched the friars in malice; but, under pressure of the crowd, they stumbled upon dunghoops and fell.

In 1298, we have another incident.

William de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, was sick unto death and made his will in the absence of all his friends by the advice of brother John of Olney [presumably a Franciscan]. This man turned his wishes aside; so that he chose to be buried not with his ancestors in the cathedral church but among the Friars Minor... At length the friars went round the streets and lanes of the city with this great man's corpse, like victors with the prey they had taken, and so they buried him in a place *wherein never man before was laid*, and where, in winter-time, he may be said rather to be drowned than buried; a place wherein I myself, in former days, have seen potherbs growing.¹

One more case may be quoted which seems (as the editor remarks) to have been a *cause célèbre* in its day, thanks to the fame and power of the two claimants. In 1467 one Jane Bradshaw, a widow, was living with her son-in-law John Raynald, porter of the west gate at Fountains abbey. She fell ill, and her daughter went in haste to the vicar of Givendale, within which parish the abbey formed a sort of separate ecclesiastical island. The vicar of Givendale was also prebendary of Ripon, in which town, three miles distant, Mrs Raynald failed to find the vicar, but found Prebendary Exilby, "broken down with the impotence and debility of old age". Exilby committed the care of the dying woman, "for this once only", to one of the

¹ *Anglia Sacra*, I, 510, 523. The Pharisaic contempt of this quotation from Luke xxiii, 53 is significant. For another serious burial quarrel see Romeyn (1286), I, 192. Two others are quoted by Bradford (p. 49, n. 2). In one, at Lübeck, the riot was so serious that the bishop and chapter had to leave the city.

Fountains monks, who brought another with him to the sick woman, and administered the last rites before she died that night. Next day John Greenwell, Abbot of Fountains and Doctor of Divinity, sent word that he intended to retain the corpse and bury it in his graveyard. This the chapter of Ripon met with a formal protest under due notarial attestation:

We do in no wise acquiesce in your proposals and your unlawful will, nor do we consent thereunto, but we beg that the body of the said Jane Bradshaw, as parishioner of this our collegiate church, be brought hither, and that the whole canonical portion [of her goods], due by reason thereof unto us and to our said church, be paid without delay (since it is certain that the said Jane did in no way become a lay-sister [*conversa*] of the said abbey) and that she be buried with us as the law requireth, unless it be first fully proved that, while in full possession of her faculties and of sound memory, she elected to be buried elsewhere.¹

If this treatment of the actual corpse as a mere pawn in the game of economic chess seems strange, we must always remember, in this connexion, the medieval habit of playing upon the horrors of death and the grave. The exposure of corpses on the gibbet and of spiked heads on the gates is well known; so also the exhumation of unpopular corpses and their subjection to post-mortem indignities. But we get a less familiar side of the same mentality in an incident recorded at La Charité-sur-Loire in 1272. The bishop wished to examine a woman suspected of heresy; the burgesses refused to give up one who had the freedom of their city. The bishop interdicted the town; but the monks of the great Cluniac monastery ignored this, and buried the dead, as usual, with Christian rites. Then the Archbishop of Sens and the Abbot of Cluny intervened; and finally it was agreed:

(1) That the woman should be given up to the bishop, (2) that one of the monks should beseech him, on bended knees, for the removal of the interdict, and (3) that 20 of the persons buried during its duration should be exhumed: that they should remain exposed during the sermon and the funeral mass; that the bishop should pronounce his absolution and that they should be restored to their graves. This terrible sentence was executed at every point.²

¹ *Ripon Chapter Acts*, Surtees Soc. p. 223.

² *La Charité*, p. 32.

Again, the Winchester monastic annalist exults in the vengeance taken by the Bishop of St David's upon a defunct and excommunicate King of Wales in 1197. Griffin, the king's successor, consented to be scourged with his brothers, and to allow the scourging of "the defunct king's corpse, by this time already stinking".¹

The editor of the *Cartulaire de Molesme* (I, 141) emphasizes the multitude of visitors whom these noble burials attracted. This would account for the emphasis with which early Cistercian statutes forbid the reception of women's corpses; yet, in process of time, the economic temptation prevailed both here and with the almost equally strict Premonstratensians.²

Another difficulty which needed even papal intervention was the practice of dividing corpses. This may have been partly due to the desire to be prayed for in more than one church; but certainly the main reason was the very natural desire to be laid in one's own chosen church, however distant from one's death-bed. Thus, in 1098, Hugh de Grantmesnil died in England, but his body was salted, sewn in an ox-hide and buried at the abbey of St-Évroul which he had founded in Normandy. This, however, was too cumbrous a procedure to become general; and, in process of time, the custom was to carry only the bones or the heart, burying the rest on the spot.³ Barbour describes in detail how, when the good Lord Douglas was killed in Spain, on his way to bury Bruce's heart in the Holy Land, they "debowillit" him, then seethed him "so that might be ta'en the flesh all wholly from the bane", and buried the "carrion" meanwhile in the nearest churchyard.⁴ Sweetheart abbey, in Kirkcudbright, was founded in 1269 to enshrine the heart of John Balliol, by his widow Devorguilla the foundress of the Oxford college. The Capucins of Vienna were said to have had in their church 150 hearts from the Austrian royal family, and the nuns of Val-de-Grâce had nearly all the hearts of the French royalty from [1650] to the Revolution. In earlier days "the Benedictine monks of

¹ Wharton, I, 303.

² See Appendix.

³ The instances I had collected have been far outdone, though not altogether superseded, by Mr C. A. Bradford in his *Heart Burial* (1933), which has appeared since I began to write this, and which should certainly be read by anyone interested in the subject.

⁴ *Bruce*, bk. xx, ll. 569ff.

St-Denis protested against division, asserting their right to possess the entire remains of French kings; but the Black and Grey Friars contested these claims and subsequently gained permission for their own churches to share in the spoil".¹ This is typical of what went on everywhere; heart-burial facilitated transference, and therefore quickened competition and gave an advantage to newer and more popular Orders. The Greyfriars of London had Archbishop Pecham's heart, while his body lay in his cathedral of Canterbury. Lady Alianor Percy left her body to the Greyfriars of Bristol, and her heart to those of London. The lady Joan de Ferrers and Sir Peter Mountford had their hearts there; so also the lady Isabel of Auvergne "under a small round slab". Finally, "in the midst of the choir, in a lofty tomb of alabaster, lieth the noble lady queen Isabel, wife of Edward the Second (called Edward of Caernarvon) and daughter to Philip the Fair, King of France.... And under the breast of her image lieth the heart of her husband King Edward". That entry in the Greyfriars' register reads strangely in connexion with the judgement of certain contemporaries on the "she-wolf of France".²

It is credibly related that the flesh of St Thomas Aquinas was boiled away from his bones: not, this time, by his own choice but for fear lest the whole body, being difficult to transport, should prove a prey to relic-robbers. For, whereas the fortune of death had brought him to rest among the Cistercians of Fossa Nuova, his own Dominicans were never satisfied until, a century later, they secured him for their convent at Toulouse through the intervention of Urban V.³ In 1299, less than a generation after St Thomas's death, this treatment of corpses was most emphatically condemned by Boniface VIII, in the bull *De-testandae feritatis*, which was afterwards embodied in the appendix to the *Corpus* of Canon Law.⁴ He writes:

we have thought fit to abolish that abuse of detestable barbarity which certain of the faithful imprudently practise in accordance with a horrible custom, lest this abuse should continue to lacerate human bodies and stir the minds of the faithful to horror and trouble those who hear tidings thereof. For the aforesaid faithful, intent upon this

¹ Bradford, p. 50.

² See Appendix.

³ *Collect. Top. et Geneal.* v, 276-8.

⁴ *Extrav. Commun.* lib. III, tit. VI, ch. I.

vicious and reprehensible custom, at the death of any one among their kinsfolk who may be illustrious for nobility of race or dignity of rank (especially if he have paid the debt to nature beyond the limits of his own country), when he has chosen to be buried in his own parts, or in some distant land—these men, (I say,) moved by a certain impulse of impious piety, truculently disembowel him, divide him limb by limb or gobbet by gobbet, and seethe him down in a caldron. Then at last, when they have parted his bones from the flesh which had clad them, they send him or carry him to be buried in the aforesaid place. Which thing is not only most abominable in the face of God's majesty, but even vehemently abhorrent in the sight of men.

Therefore

lest any henceforward of whatsoever state or degree they may be . . . violate this our statute by thus inhumanly treating, or causing to be treated, the bodies of the dead, let them know that they incur the sentence of excommunication *ipso facto*, wherefrom they cannot obtain the benefit of absolution (except at the moment of death) from any but the Apostolic See. And, in addition, let him whose body hath been so inhumanly treated be denied ecclesiastical burial.

This emphatic prohibition, however, like so many others, was practically abrogated for all who could afford to pay for an indult.¹ A very interesting variant of the heart-burial custom is recorded in [1210]: "Bishop Otho of Würzburg gave to the convent of Ahausen a barrel of excellent Franconian wine, and asked in return that his right arm might be buried in the convent."²

It is a very human tradition, which can be traced through many steps in Mr Bradford's book. "The desiccation and evisceration of the dead can be traced back to the neolithic period"; it seemed to ensure some sort of immortality. The early Christians discouraged all mutilation of corpses; but popular religion insisted more and more upon the other-worldly advantages of burial in a holy place; and to this, in practice, evisceration was a natural corollary. Papal bulls would probably have been powerless to prevent the practice altogether, even if indults had not been obtainable. For, at the back, lay that very

¹ See Appendix, and Bradford, p. 47.

² Hurter, II, 42.

natural feeling which Browning has expressed in *The Bishop orders his Tomb at St Praxed's Church*:

And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!

That is the counter-exaggeration with which men met the materialistic philosopher's sentiment:

Proinde ubi se videas hominem indignarier ipsum
Post mortem fore ut aut putescat corpore posto
Aut flammis interfiat malisve ferarum,
Scire licet non sincerum sonere atque subesse
Caecum aliquem cordi stimulum, quamvis neget ipse
Credere se quemquam sibi sensum in morte futurum....
Nam si in morte malumst malis morsuque ferarum
Tractari, non invenio qui non sit acerbum
Ignibus impositum calidis torrescere flammis
Aut in melle situm suffocari atque rigere
Frigore, cum summo gelidi cubat aequore saxi,
Urgerive superne obtritum pondere terrae.¹

¹ "Therefore when you see a man bemoaning his hard case, that after death he shall either rot with his body laid in the grave or be devoured by flames or the jaws of wild beasts, you may be sure that his ring betrays a flaw and that there lurks in his heart a secret goad, though he himself declare that he does not believe that any sense will remain to him after death.... For if it is an evil after death to be pulled about by the devouring jaws of wild beasts, I cannot see why it should not be a cruel pain to be laid on fires and burn in hot flames, or to be placed in honey and stifled, or to stiffen with cold, stretched on the smooth surface of an icy slab of stone, or to be pressed down and crushed by a load of earth above." Lucretius, III, 870; tr. H. A. J. Munro (Camb. 1873), p. 78.

CHAPTER V

THE VALUE OF MASSES

ANOTHER natural attraction to benefactors, and therefore another principal source of monastic income, was the number of Masses said within those walls. There is nothing of this kind in the earliest monasticism; even in St Benedict's Rule, only about two Masses a week are contemplated throughout the whole monastery.¹ But, from very early days, rich endowments were given under definite obligation of Masses for the donors' and their kinsfolk's souls. At first, this brought about no very great change. As Molinier puts it, in his monograph on monastic obituary records:

Though the ancient Benedictine abbeys counted many inmates, yet very few had received the priestly Orders necessary to acquit the work of a foundation in full; the others, plain deacons or monks, could only assist at Mass. Take for example the obituary of St-Martin-des-Champs, and you will see that scarcely one monk in ten could fulfil the priestly functions. Therefore it was only to the most illustrious or generous of their benefactors that the early Benedictines could accord the great favour of a solemn anniversary.²

But, in process of time, even these separate anniversary Masses amounted to large numbers; moreover, by a natural process of cheapening, benefactors demanded more and more Masses, in recompense for their gifts, from generation to generation. As early as about A.D. 1200, Peter of Blois twice counts it as one of the main superiorities of the Carthusians over the other Orders, that they have retained their early simplicity, and that very few Masses are said in their convents; familiarity, he complains, brings contempt.³ This same praise of the Carthusians is repeated by a preacher of the fifteenth century; he quotes Hosea (viii, 11): "The people hath made many altars to sin; altars are become unto him for sin."⁴ Abbot Philippe de Harvengt [1160]

¹ See *Five Centuries of Religion*, I, 213, cf. pp. 114, 119; E. C. Butler, *Benedictine Monachism*, p. 283.

² Molinier, *Obituaires*, p. 121.

³ *Epp.* 86, 217. I have given fuller quotations on this subject in vol. I, pp. 130-3 and 490-1.

⁴ MS. Univ. Lib. Camb. Mm. 210. f. 3 a.

was a Premonstratensian in the days when that Order and the Cistercians still retained a good deal of their reforming energy; he clearly recognized the moral problem raised by the system of Mass-fees. Judas, he writes, sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver; but

our priests oftentimes immolate Christ on the altar for a penny—nay, for a half-penny, not considering that He would not that He should be sold at such a price, nor that the mystery of His passion should be celebrated with such intentions. He said “as often as ye do this, ye shall do it in commemoration of Me”, that is, not “in commemoration of a penny”; not “in commemoration of this world”; not “in commemoration of any earthly comfort”, but “in commemoration of Me”, in order that ye may please and love Me.¹

A still more distinguished churchman, Petrus Cantor [1180], emphatically condemned the abuses attendant on Mass-endowments.² A Cistercian General Chapter decree of 1182 runs: “Let there be no promise of Masses under any definite money-agreement [*pro pacto certo*] for that is simoniacal.”³ St Francis also was aware of the danger; priests and Masses were very rare among the early Franciscans: “For he foresaw that the brethren would seek to justify themselves through Masses, and to bring them to a matter of earthly gain, as we see in these present days”: so wrote the Franciscan Alvarez Pelayo in [1340].⁴ The early Dominican statutes explicitly forbid trade in Masses.⁵ Most interesting of all is the case of St Stephen of Grammont [1080], who delivered himself most explicitly in his statutes for the Order which he founded. His monks are not only forbidden to accept appropriated churches, but, “further still, insomuch as in you lieth, do no more than the trees of the forest to harm peoples or churches, whether near or far. Therefore do ye on no account accept Masses for a week or for thirty days or for a year, nor any price whatsoever that may be offered by name for a Mass”. He spoke even more strongly on this point to his disciples in private. He had refused to undertake prayers in

¹ *P.L.* CCIII, col. 683. Philippe, after a common medieval fashion, quotes paraphrastically and from memory (1 Cor. xi, 26).

² *Verb. Abbrev.* c. CXXVI, *P.L.* CCV, col. 97.

³ Martène, *Thesaurus*, IV, col. 1253.

⁴ *De Planctu Ecclesiae*, lib. v, c. 5.

⁵ *Archiv*, I, 222.

return for gifts offered by benefactors, and thus explained the refusal: "Thus and thus these folk, in their ignorance, would persuade us to become simoniacs under a cover of goodness: but God forbid that we should sell divine service! For it is a hireling's office to pray when something is given, and to cease from prayer when no gift is forthcoming."¹ In fact, almost every great monastic revival aimed originally at avoiding the cash-nexus of the Mass, whether by a conscious or an unconscious return to the earliest Christian simplicity.

That simplicity has been admirably traced by a learned Benedictine of St-Maur, Dom Antoine Guiard.² Originally, the faithful regularly communicated at every Eucharist; and the wealthier or more generous brought their contributions for the service in bread, wine, or wax (4). Later on, money-offerings crept in also; but St Augustine prescribed that these should be given straight to the poor (11). As it became less and less usual for the congregation to communicate, these money-offerings came in greater proportion; and, by a very natural twist, the celebrant came to regard them as his own perquisite, to the exclusion of the poor and of his fellow-clergy (10). The result was

as one of the most celebrated doctors of Louvain remarks, that the people, having at last grown accustomed to see the offerings of the faithful turned to the exclusive profit of the celebrating priest, believed on their side that they had the right of getting the Holy Sacrifice offered at their own will, and in conformity with the intentions of whosoever should pay for the Mass... Hence this practice was established which is the subject of my discourse; a practice so universal nowadays and entailing such notorious consequences. I see two sorts of consequences; some regarding the people, and others the priests; almost all seem reprehensible (16).

First, with regard to the people. St Carlo Borromeo, in his Council of Milan (1579), attempted to bring the laity back to

¹ E. Martène, *Antiq. Mon. Rit.* p. 310, c. 5; *P.L.* cciv, cols. 1076, 1141.

² *Dissertation sur l'honoraire des Messes*, nouvelle éd. 1757. The book was published anonymously; no other course was open in those days to an author who argued that Mass-fees were disadvantageous to true religion. This second edition deals with the criticisms of the Jesuit *Journal de Trévoux*, which had reviewed the first in Jan.-Feb. 1749. The references in brackets refer to pages of the 1757 edition.

the primitive custom of congregational offerings, which the priest should mention at Mass.

Nothing could be wiser than this advice and those regulations; but nothing has been worse observed. The people, always ingenious in inventing new practices of devotion, put such confidence in these that they often prefer such observances to the most essential duties. The usage of the primitive Church, as is well known, was to assemble all the faithful of any place to one single sacrifice offered for all, and especially for all who were there present. There was no glorification or complaint in virtue of a greater or smaller share than another's; all alike were persuaded that this sacred Host, containing an inexhaustible source of grace and blessing, could be withdrawn from no man but by his own fault and unfitness. All flocked to it with equal confidence; each, according to his power, brought certain offerings. But, when the custom of giving money rather than bread and wine and wax and flour had gradually crept in, and when the people saw the priests appropriate this, then they also changed their methods, becoming more reserved and less generous, until at last they confined themselves to giving only when the priest said a Mass according to the giver's individual intentions (21).

Eugenius II (824-7) and his successor Leo IV both reprobated this idea of selfish Masses. But human nature has been too strong; so that

popular prejudices and illusions on the subject of Masses to Order [*les Messes de commande*] have given the heretics of our days an excuse for proclaiming that, according to the Catholics, the Mass is an external act of religion, the fruits of which may be applied, at the ministrant's will, either to the faithful dead or to those men who are still alive, without any disposition on their side (53).

It was natural, therefore, that the puritanism of monastic reformers should render them hostile to the systematic accumulation of endowments through obligations for Masses. Some, perhaps, knew enough of Church history to realize, if only roughly, how the custom had grown up; others shrank from it instinctively, seeing clearly whither it was leading and was likely to lead. But the older Orders could scarcely have retraced their steps except by a sort of revolution. It is difficult to get exact numbers, but the scattered indications help us a little. The Cistercians of Ourscamp, in 1218, undertook in payment for one liberal benefaction to celebrate two special Masses daily.¹

¹ Peigné-Delacourt, p. 6.

As early as 1244, the monks of Durham were pledged to 7332 Masses a year.¹ A quite small nunnery had 1459 yearly Masses to celebrate.²

In process of time, Masses grew round the abbeys as ivy grows round a tree, yet no man dared or even wished to lay his axe to the root. Dom Guiard describes most graphically the many temptations on the part of religious communities to refuse no opportunity of increasing their Mass-endowments (88). Thus, their obligations increasing with their revenues, they fell by degrees into a sort of liturgical bankruptcy. Here and there, perhaps, an exceptionally generous benefactor would give enough to maintain a whole extra monk in perpetuity. In 1225, Ela Longespée, Countess of Warwick, gave letters patent

certifying that she is bound to the Prior and Convent of Selborne in 100 marks for the support of one canon, a chaplain, to celebrate Mass daily for her soul during her life and after her death, to be paid within the next five years; in which payment should she fail, the sheriffs of Oxon and Hampshire may compel payment by all her lands, tenements and goods in their bailiwicks.³

In 1285, the monks of Canterbury Cathedral pledged themselves to repay Edward I's rich benefactions by saying three Masses daily for him, his queen, and his son.⁴ Noble and rich patrons did almost as much. Isabella, Countess of Warwick, about A.D. 1450, obtained leave to appropriate to the abbey of Tewkesbury churches to the value of 300 marks, in order to add six monks to the community "who should send up the incense of Masses and prayers to the Most Highest, for the health of her soul and those of her predecessors and successors".⁵ But waste was even more difficult to avoid in the Middle Ages than nowadays; so that these fresh endowments had a painful way of evaporating and leaving only the Mass-obligation behind. Therefore monks began to hire secular chaplains, upon whom they devolved some of their work.⁶ By the time of the Council of Vienne (1311) the difficulty was so serious that the assembled Fathers set themselves to grapple with it in earnest. They de-

¹ *Rites of Durham* (1903), p. 149; cf. Snape, p. 146.

² *Five Centuries of Religion*, I, 490.

³ Macray, *Selborne*, p. 72.

⁵ Dugdale-Caley, II, 63.

⁴ Dugdale-Caley, I, 104.

⁶ See Appendix.

creed that no monk, who had reached the age of 25, and was not otherwise disqualified, might refuse to take Priest's Orders when commanded by his abbot. Yet we have overwhelming evidence for neglect, during the later Middle Ages, of even these statutory Masses. Indeed, this neglect began at a very early date, and sometimes in the grossest form of furtive repudiation. "The majority of Obituaries" writes Molinier "bear traces of erasures; many of the names which [the great martyrologist] Usuard wrote in that of St-Germain were effaced as early as the later ninth or early tenth century"; that is, within half a century of their insertion.¹ Chaucer specifies this as the last and most intolerable accusation of anti-Franciscan critics. His Summoner tells how earnestly the friar promised spiritual succour to all who should contribute:

"And whan that he was out at dore anon
He planed away the names everichon
That he biforn had writen in his tables"—

"Nay, ther thou lixt, thou Somonour!" quod the Frere.²

Yet for this practice we have the evidence of friars themselves. The Obituary of the Franciscans at Landshut has had all its earlier names carefully erased with pumice-stone so as to make room for later entries; these erasures have not even spared "the venerable Father, brother Conrad von Weilheim", who had been the special glory of the first generation.³ In the later centuries of the Middle Ages, monasteries could have faced their statutory Mass-obligations only by increasing the number of monks; yet, on the contrary, the numbers diminished very considerably. The process had begun very definitely before the Black Death, which in fact seems to have hastened it far less than might have been expected. The number of Mass-contracts broken before the Reformation must have been enormous. Indeed, this was clearly recognized, and desperate attempts were made to meet the evil. The subject is so important for medieval religious history, and my brief allusion to it in the Ford Lectures

¹ Molinier, *Obituaires*, p. 136; cf. p. 97.

² C.T. D, l. 1757.

³ C. Eubel, *Oberdeutsche Minoritenprovinz* (Würzburg, 1886), p. 239. Similarly Dante's Ubertino da Casale accuses his fellow-Franciscans of sometimes selling the same taper ten times over, to as many different expectants of its spiritual benefits (*Archiv*, III, 105).

II NONIAN. DER Monachoru. Mauricoli. Ingalmari
 & Niohardi. heremidie. Amaldrudis uero doctores
 Raimundus...
 NONIAN. Obiit hugo nre egs monachus ^{S. Germani pap.} Bernard.
 nre conggs monachul. Godesfridus in e. hie. O. Lmard ^{in fac. s. germani.}
 Guntrop. Radulfus. in dyon. Agno. abb.
 VIII IOIN. DER Guarnonis mon. ^{S. Germani.}
 Fromm. duf. in. e. hie. s. Germani. p. Ob. Retra. monach nre egs.
 VII IOIN. DER Monach Vualtari. & Odalgisi. Atq. Odelmari.
 & Richery moq nre egs. Kaut. Luc.
 VI IOIN. DER Adolai. hie. Hildradi. dux. Walthari. d. o.
 delbaldi. mon. Iegisfredi. dux. Atq. Donnus. Lezelmus. abb. Vualterus. fac. & mon.
 V IOIN. DER Hludmari. abb. Adalrudi. fac. Gerboldi. fac.
 & uuarimber. monach. Atq. Adalhardi. fac. & Gerboldi. fac.
 batiffe. & Godefred. luc. & Luald. fac. & Luc. Adans.
 III IOIN. DER
 obiit Alq. in fac. S. Germani. parisiensis.

MASSSES ERASED

Page 198 of the ninth-century *Obituary* of St-Germain-des-Prés



at Oxford showed that it was so unfamiliar to my audience, and especially to two well-read priests there present, that I must deal with it more fully here.¹

To begin with, quite a large number of smaller monasteries became extinct before the Reformation; some of them long before. This is true even of comparatively peaceful and orderly England; on the Continent the proportion was far greater, especially in those districts which were most ravaged by war, such as northern Italy, the frontier districts of the German Empire, and France during the Hundred Years' War. Again, it will presently be seen how often a house, short of actual extinction, decayed enormously in income and shrank in population: hence the steady temptation to economize by minimizing Mass-obligations. We have, *e.g.*, a

Memorandum that, in the days of Anne de Vere, abbess of Barking [1295-1318]... it was ordained by common assent of the convent that the anniversaries of the ancient abbesses who departed this life one or two hundred years since should be omitted altogether (except the solemn Mass in common) for the greater alleviation of the convent, although these [anniversaries] increased in their days and will seem to increase in future. These are the names of those abbesses who are to be removed: the lady Alimia, the lady Agnes, the lady Edith, the lady Mary, sister of St Thomas [Becket] the martyr, the lady Maud, [natural] daughter of King Henry II, and Sibilla de Diure, abbess elect. Let our successors do the same, even though (as aforesaid) it was continued after their death; except those abbesses for whom we ought to receive a general pittance every year; for these cannot and ought not to be removed. So let it be done also with the ancient prioresses, to wit, Margaret Peverell, Mabel, Sara of Furness and Ida de l'Isle.²

When decay had gone still further, and the more or less bankrupt house was absorbed into some more stable foundation (*e.g.* into the Oxford and Cambridge colleges from the earlier fifteenth century onwards), it is very unlikely that all these obligations were strictly recorded and passed on and fulfilled. Indeed, such evidence as we have points pretty clearly the other way. In 1481, the hospital at Romney was in a state of decay which seems clearly to imply a long-standing cessation of Masses, but the deed of appropriation to Magdalen College, Oxford, seems to

¹ See Appendix.

² Dugdale-Caley, 1, 442.

offer no security for their revival.¹ At Snape, a cell to Colchester abbey, Boniface IX's bull of suppression (1400) rehearses that there are no longer monks there but as occasional visitors, "wherefore divine worship is for the most part neglected in this priory, and the founder's pious intention is defrauded".² At Reading, at the end of the Middle Ages, the almshouses were in utter decay, "without either poor or clergy, and now there is neither God's service nor prayer, nor creature alive to keep it"; but the abbot had appropriated the endowments. Edward IV was appealed to, but the scandal still continued.³ Far worse must have been the neglect at Camajore near Lucca, of which I briefly sketch the story in vol. II, pp. 64-5.

Again, there is evidence for mere slothful neglect, while the monastery was still standing and perhaps even flourishing to the outward eye. Cluny, the greatest abbey in Europe, had indeed been hard hit by the Hundred Years' War; but it still had 80 monks in 1428. In that year, the papal commissioners for the reform of the abbey exhorted the abbot to raise the number of monks to something like its earlier sum of 150 or 200,

in order that the sweet burden of Masses, lessons, ceremonies and divine service in general may be more delectably borne by a sufficient multitude of Religious (a burden which, among few brethren, could be rendered heavy and wearisome and insupportable), and let the lord abbot pay strict attention to that horrible peril of eternal malediction which, according to Canon Law, impendeth upon all who diminish or weaken the number of Religious, wherefrom followeth the diminution and subtraction, from living and from dead, of their due suffrages.⁴

In an earlier clause, they definitely specify Masses suppressed, which they command the abbot to restore.

The English Benedictine Chapters also bear witness to this. The Canterbury province, in 1249, decreed that, "lest the souls of defunct benefactors be deprived through omission and negligence of the Masses owed unto them", any priest-monk who passed more than three consecutive days without saying Mass should be punished.⁵ Exactly the same provision is made

¹ *Lit. Cant.* III, 306.

² Dugdale-Caley, IV, 559.

³ Dugdale-Caley, IV, 47.

⁴ *Rev. bénéd.* (1923), xxxv, 174; cf. p. 172.

⁵ Pantin, I, 45. The other references will be found on pp. 241, 263; and in II, 46, 83-4.

in the almost contemporary statutes of the York province, and in 1287 it is provided that such fraud should be avoided by hiring secular priests, when necessary, to say the Masses. Again, the Chapter Acts of 1343 (united provinces) suggest irregularities in performance of monastic Masses, and those of 1444 put this beyond question. It is there enacted that monks, "when they have been refreshed with flesh-food in the chambers of the higher officials [*praelatorum*] or elsewhere, must by no means absent themselves from the regular saying of Mass or Hours in church, nor shall they abstain from the celebration of Masses on that account".¹ Those of 1363 direct visitors to enquire "whether the monks [of this particular monastery] fulfil completely, as they are bound, the Masses and other peculiar prayers for their founders and other benefactors". The Augustinian Provincial Chapter, in 1256, gave the non-celebrant a week's grace, but then decreed his separation from the society of his brethren until amendment.²

Episcopal visitations show that these difficulties were not merely imaginary. Bishop Goldwell, in 1493, after his visitation of the cathedral priory at Norwich, issued a very solemn injunction.

Item, seeing that a man's last will hath the force of law, We therefore, having it ever before our eyes that We are defenders of men's last wills, do strictly enjoin upon you that all foundations of obits and chantries for dead men be kept, in spite of all hindrances, according to the force, form and effect of the original foundation, even as ye wish to avoid the penalties imposed by Canon Law. Against all who contravene this We will fulminate the severest censures, specially reserving to Ourselves the power of absolution therefrom or relaxation.³

At Bishop Alnwick's visitation of Peterborough in 1437, it was found that "oftentimes very few Masses are celebrated". Again, in 1447, it was found that the monks had been in the habit of receiving special pocket-money for their pains in saying Mass, and "the present abbot has withdrawn all the [payments] aforesaid during his whole time, by occasion whereof such obits are not celebrated".⁴ At Thornton Abbey, in 1423, "there were

¹ Wilkins, *Concilia*, II, 715 b; Reynerus, app. p. 129.

² H. E. Salter, *Chapters Aug. Canons*, p. 33.

³ *Vis. Dioc. Norwich*, C.S. (1888), p. 6.

⁴ Lincoln Record Soc. (1914), VII, 120; (1929), XXI, 277, 294, 379.

at least a hundred fewer Masses said every year than there ought to be". And at the same house, in 1440, there ought to have been "a chaplain, celebrating continually for the founders and benefactors of the monastery", but there is now no such priest, "by reason whereof some Masses are omitted in the year".

Even stronger evidence comes from the Continent. St-Martin at Autun was at the head of a whole congregation of priories. The General Chapter of this congregation, in 1361, passed a formal resolution "to replace by one High Mass, sung daily before matins, those anniversary Masses which had become so numerous that they could not celebrate them". They had already tried to meet their financial difficulties by diminishing the number of monks. About 1408, the Count of Joigny and the Lord of Uchon "protested that the monks were not regularly celebrating the anniversaries of several lords and ladies of Aubigny whose bodies lay in the abbey of St-Martin. They refused to pay a considerable rent in corn which was assigned to those foundations....The abbot promised to observe these anniversaries scrupulously in future."¹

Again, evidence for a whole group of smaller priories comes from the official records of visitations made by the Bishop of Troyes in 1499. Masses were found to have ceased altogether at the priories of St-Vinebaud, St-Pierre-du-Pont, St-Pierredes-Prés, St-Remi, Ste-Thuise, and Chalette. At St-Grégoire, one only was said every year, on the day of the patron saint. At three other priories, only three Masses were said per week. In all these cases, it is true, the *commendam* system seems to have reduced the brethren to one or two at each of these dependent cells; but by that time more than half of the greater French houses were under that system, and the evidence for general neglect leaves no room for great surprise at these definite cases recorded in one of the very rare French episcopal visitation-journals. For instance, the great Cluniac house of La Charité was found by the visitor to have cut down its daily Masses from 11 to 8.² At the Brigittine convent of Dienheim, in 1496, the bishop noted: "Two Masses ought to be read there weekly; for it is sufficiently endowed; and the said monks scarce

¹ Bulliot, pp. 287, 290, 292.

² *Bib. Clun.* p. 1711.

read one Mass there.”¹ Similar cases at Besançon and Pontoise and Felley will be found in my Appendix, with evidence that Masses were also being dropped in places where the direct monastic influence cannot be traced, but where the facts suggest the same frequent lack of strict principle.

These things, naturally, could as a rule, be verified in their fulness only by the official visitors; but the public knew or suspected a good deal. In the first place, the evident decay of many small houses suggested inevitable deductions, such as a Polish professor drew in [1380].² He pointed out that those papal bulls for the dissolution of decayed houses, which were then already becoming frequent, involved a breach of contract; “the souls of the dead are defrauded of the suffrages procured and ordained for themselves and for their kinsfolk”; “the endower is deceived and is scandalized”; “popular devotion is impeded”. Even in other monasteries, writes Dionysius Cartusianus [1430], the Mass is sometimes entirely omitted, and this is sometimes a definite fraud: “the poor are robbed of their alms, the dead of their prayers, and founders are robbed of the [spiritual] help which they had intended and hoped for.”³ Then on the verge of the Reformation, in 1511, we find the prelates and clergy of the Canterbury Province sending a piteous complaint to the Pope, and beseeching him to curtail certain privileges granted in favour of the Friars and the Hospitallers, to the detriment of religious life in England.⁴ The prelates represent how a multitude of illustrious founders and benefactors have laid certain burdens upon monastic bodies and others “solely in reliance upon the primæval laws and constitutions of the Roman Church”; yet these laws are now set at naught. Such are the abuses that “monasteries, collegiate churches, and all pious places have either cast away, as impossible to be borne, the burdens laid upon them by their founders, or are breaking down under their weight, since they have scarce the slenderest livelihood left for their sustentation”. Therefore

¹ *Zeitsch. f. Gesch. d. Oberrheins* (1875), xxvii, 254. See Appendix for four other monastic cases in that diocese.

² Matthew of Cracow, *De Squaloribus Romanæ Curiae* in Brown, *Fasciculus*, II, 600. For the omission of Masses through decay, see Molinier, *Obituaires*, pp. 136 ff.

³ *Opera*, xxxvii, 44, 45, 199, 213.

⁴ *Reg. Mayew*, pp. 50 ff.

they cast themselves at the feet of His Holiness and implore reform.¹

Here we get sidelights from the Year Books, one of the richest sources for medieval social life. The Dominican Bromyard, in his manual of Canon Law, notes that the breach of Mass-contracts by Religious comes under the writ of *Cessavit per biennium*, "cessation for two years".² By an English statute (one of the few which seems borrowed almost directly from Roman Law), if a tenant neglected to perform the duties annexed to his tenancy, and had ceased for two years, then he might be dispossessed. This, says Bromyard, applies also to monastic endowments; and the indexes to the Year Books prove him right here not only in theory but in practice. By a curious chance, perhaps, the first two instances I have found concern Bromyard's own Order.³ In 1306, a Dominican convent was summoned for alleged neglect of divine services undertaken in virtue of endowments by the complainant's great-grandfather. In 1307, the Dominicans of Salisbury were attacked on a similar complaint; their advocate pleaded in defence that the complainant had not stated the exact number of Masses, matins or prayers upon which he based his writ. Another case occurs in Bromyard's own time. The complainant pleaded that his ancestor had given certain land "to a certain [Carmelite] prior and his successors, to sing every Monday a Mass of Our Lady and certain other services in the priory of G.; and that he has wrongly ceased to perform the said services."⁴ A fourth case concerned the abbey of Creake in 1341. Margaret de Roos sued the Abbot of Creake for neglecting the services bound up with an endowment of land. The tenure of this land pledged him to find a chaplain from among the brethren of his abbey "to sing divine services in her chapel, that is to say, matins, Masses, vespers, etc., and feed certain poor persons who were to receive certain daily loaves, etc." The abbot tried to escape on a side-issue; but judgement was given against him, and Margaret was put into possession of that land which was no longer earned.⁵ Apparently only about

¹ *Reg. Mayew*, pp. 50 ff.

² Brit. Museum. MS. Royal 10. c. x. f. 123 (*s.v. religio*).

³ *Year Books* 33-35 Ed. I, R.S. pp. 262, 488.

⁴ An. 45. Ed. III (Tottell, 1565), f. 15; cf. f. 26 b.

⁵ *Year Books* 15 Ed. III, p. 448.

one in ten or twenty of these *cessavit* writs were concerned with the lapse of monastic services; usually it is a case where an ordinary tenant is neglecting to cultivate or to render his legal dues. But it is suggestive that the monastic cases should be even so frequent as they are, considering the few chances that a plaintiff must have had for proving conclusively that there was neglect of what his ancestors had prescribed long ago. The Salisbury case shows how the Dominicans tried a plea which could not be answered except by reference to documents of which, very likely, the only copies were in their own monastery; and in the Carmelite case the pleadings are so long and complicated that they might well have discouraged any ordinary litigant. There is no indication that the Carmelites denied the alleged cessation of services, but, apparently, judgement went for them on one of the other issues.

A petition of 1295 from the English prelates to Edward I shows that the writ *cessavit* might technically be used to deprive a priest of his benefice in case of persistent non-residence and neglect of duty:¹ but, here again, the actual application of this theoretical remedy bore no proportion whatever to the reigning evil.

We need not wonder, then, that medieval benefactors' charters tend to change their tone in process of time. The earlier givers, as we have seen, guarded mainly against false executors or violent encroachments on the part of their own heirs or of neighbouring landlords. In the later Middle Ages, we begin to find precautions not in that direction, but against breach of contract on the monks' own part. An early example of this comes from Canwell in [1260], where Philippa Marmion left an endowment for the sustentation of one extra monk-chaplain who should "perpetually celebrate divine rites for her soul" and those of her kinsfolk. But she directed her executors to exact a solemn oath from the prior and brethren that they would never omit these rites, and she took the further precaution of inserting a clause that, in case of default, one of the executors or his heirs might at once distrain upon the priory mill at Tamworth.² This practice grew, and the records of St Catharine's College at

¹ *Reg. Pontissara*, p. 778.

² *Dugdale-Caley*, IV, 107.

Cambridge supply an excellent example not long before the Reformation (1504). Hugh Pemberton left £163. 6s. 8d. to secure that one of the Fellows should sing Mass for his soul daily while the world should endure, with a yearly sermon and distribution of alms. For each Mass neglected, the College was to pay a forfeit of 6s. 8d., and the most elaborate precautions were taken for enabling the executors (the Merchant 'Taylors' Gild in London) to enforce cumulative penalties and to distrain without further litigation.¹ Sometimes, however, we find founders themselves making allowances. At Abbotsbury, in 1505, a chantry was founded with the proviso that, if by accident there were ever less than eight priests in the monastery, then the Mass need not be said.²

The fact is that, long before this, many of the older foundations had either been silently repudiated or had been liquidated in a sort of spiritual bankruptcy court. From an early date, priests had sought different side-tracks from fulfilling their obligations. One expedient was for the priest to say two or more Masses a day; this, however, was early and emphatically forbidden by conciliar decrees. Then crept in a very different device, which was condemned at the Council of Lambeth in 1281 (c. 2): "Let not the celebrant believe that, by saying one Mass, he can make satisfaction to two persons for each of whom he has promised to celebrate specially and integrally." Priests who have already done this are to make up their arrears and to fulfil their obligations integrally in future. If they recognize their inability, the endowment must be given up to the poor: "if they neglect both those ordinances, let them be corrected by their Ordinaries as men who defraud the faithful."³ The president of that council was Archbishop Pecham, a Franciscan and a great champion of evangelical poverty. But, in spite of these bold words, I believe that no instance has yet been produced of a medieval priest, monastic or secular, who has actually been punished for neglecting soul-Masses with anything like the severity implied by the conciliar decree.

¹ H. Philpott, *Documents relating to St Catharine's College, Cambridge* (C.U.P. 1861), pp. 42-9. For similar precautions at Bâle, see R. Wackernagel, *Gesch. d. Stadt Basel* (1916), II, ii, 784.

² Dugdale-Caley, III, 53.

³ Wilkins, II, 52. See the very pertinent comments in Guiard, pp. 284ff. I give fuller text in Appendix.

The only course that could have completely solved the difficulty would have been to return to the primitive practice, and to abolish private Masses altogether, except where the commitments were already irrevocable. That expedient, however, seems never to have been seriously considered; by this time, the cash-nexus was too firmly established to be broken: "no money, no Mass", except in very exceptional cases. In 1402, a papal indult was granted to the Masters and Scholars of Michaelhouse at Cambridge. A benefactor had assigned certain rents to keep two scholars and one chaplain to celebrate Masses of the Blessed Virgin: but "the said rents, through the malice of the times, afterwards became so diminished that such scholars and chaplain could not and cannot be sustained therewith". The Pope granted that, in these circumstances, the chaplain and his Masses might be dispensed with, but "there shall be, especially in each Mass of the Blessed Virgin celebrated by the college, a special commemoration of the said [benefactor] by a collect for the welfare of his soul".¹

Shortly after this, we get sudden evidence of wholesale neglect in France. The Celestines, founded in 1264 by the future Celestine V, of Dante's *Gran Rifiuto*, were almost the latest of reformed Benedictine congregations. They numbered about 150 houses, of which 21 were in France.² It must be borne in mind that France had suffered cruelly from the Hundred Years' War.

Jean Gerson, one of the greatest churchmen of his century, died in 1429. He had two nephews in the Celestine monastery at Avignon, to which he left all his books by will. Not long, apparently, before his death he was consulted by certain Celestines as to this Mass difficulty. His answer runs to ten folio pages.³ To begin with, is it not simony to believe that, by laying down a certain sum of money, we can buy certain special spiritual benefits? Gerson admits the danger; everything, he says, depends upon the right intention (§ 13). Men ought to think spiritually on spiritual subjects, but there are few who do not mingle tares with the pure wheat when they sow (§ 17). Admitting, however, in general the moral right of the benefactor to stipulate for his *quid pro quo*, is that stipulation really satisfied

¹ C.P.L. v, 585.

² Heimbucher, I, 279.

³ *Opera* (1606), II, col. 433.

when he has paid for a private Mass, and this is lumped together with another benefactor or benefactors, one single Mass being said for the whole group? Here, says Gerson, it is really a question of the actual terms of contract. If the benefactor knows that the custom of this particular church is to lump obits together, then he suffers no wrong by the union: *a fortiori*, if the contracting clergy have warned him explicitly that his benefaction will procure him not an integral and special Mass, but a share with one or more others. If, however, giver and receiver have made a clear bargain beforehand, it does not seem that the custom of the particular church can justify the lumping of obits. It has taken Gerson six folio pages to get so far as this, and his circumlocutions testify to his embarrassment; for he evidently knows that these unions, so strictly forbidden in 1281, were common everywhere in 1425. But at last he breaks out in impatience, it would seem, with this whole labyrinth of difficulties (§ 41). He has just quoted from Hugh of St-Victor, "that prayer is most acceptable to God, when we forget ourselves and all things, nor know what we ask, by means of a certain rapt uplifting or ascent unto God". Then he continues:

O, that the men of this world could be persuaded how much more acceptable is the prayer made by devout and silent and quiet men, and how much more is obtained from God by their most joyful and sweet elevation unto Him, how much more it pleaseth Him and looseth us from the pains due unto us, than the mere bodily exercise in excessive vigils, which often do more to trouble the brain and to beget weariness than to induce devotion, even as the Lord spake once through the prophet [Amos], saying: *Take away from me the tumult of thy songs!* Yet I speak not thus by way of blame, but in order that reasonable service may be rendered, and that a better may be preferred to a good, and the animal man may not ever prevail, and judge unjustly the spiritual man. But what? it is written: "Fit thy manners to men as they are, and the privilege of the few doth not change the duties, laws and institutes of the great majority."

The diffuseness and frequent vagueness of these ten pages, in answer to a question which Pecham had decided in a tenth of a page, is in itself significant. Still more significant, however, is the fact that this reformed Order, while Gerson was scarcely cold in his grave, procured a papal indult in contradiction to his judgement. The story is fully told by Molinier (who, however,

does not seem to realize the fact that Gerson had first been consulted) in his *Obituaires*, pp. 143 ff. and 301 ff.

In 1436, the head monastery of the Order, at Paris, cut down its Mass-list drastically by the union of different obits. The preamble rehearses how they, like all approved monks, "do not undertake spiritual burdens mainly for the sake of worldly gain, seeing that they not only do not desire all these things with corrupt earthly intention—nay, they count them but dung, that they may win Christ"—yet they cannot do without food and raiment, and the labourer is worthy of his hire. And then the document goes on to real business.

We must recognize that, although some monasteries are bound to certain foundations of Masses, obits, or other spiritual exercises as though they were to endure in perpetuity, yet the bond of such obligation doth not bind so strictly as that it may never be unloosed.... For example, and to come to the root of this present question, this venerable monastery of St Mary of the Celestines at Paris was very poorly endowed at its first foundation, so that the few brethren, who then served God therein, suffered great penury of things necessary. Wherefore, in course of time, they bound themselves and their successors, as is the custom with Religious Orders, to undertake very many spiritual burdens on the understanding that these should endure in perpetuity; this they did in order that, by help of the profits connected with these burdens, they might provide better for their own necessities, and multiply themselves both in number and in merit in God's holy service, for the praise of God and the salvation of souls. This, and none other, was their intention. But, [seeing that all things change in this mortal life] therefore, by law and equity, such foundations ought to extend [only] so far, and to have [only] such perpetuity, as may correspond to the duration of the worldly offerings which result therefrom. For such offerings were the cause of the undertaking of these burdens, and the rule is that, when the cause ceases, the effect ceases with it. Moreover, a benefice is given for the sake of some duty; consequently, the benefice is the cause of undertaking the duty; in this case, therefore, if the benefice disappear, a man is not bound to undertake the duty. Moreover, as foresaid, he who serveth the altar should live by the altar; the living which proceedeth from the altar is the cause of the service rendered; and, if the living ceases, the accustomed service may lawfully be omitted, since a man is not bound thereunto but by the offering alone.

Therefore (pursues the document) some ten years ago the Provincial Minister of the Celestines in France went to Rome

and had a familiar audience with Martin V, the upshot of which was that the Pope said: "I give and grant to thee and thy successors licence, power and authority for the reduction of such foundations as concern thine Order." In consequence, the reduction is now taken in hand, and the Masses are cut down, apparently, by more than 50 per cent. Certainly one group of four foundations, amounting to thirteen Masses a week, is melted down into a single foundation of three Masses a week; and even these are devolved from the head monastery at Paris, which had undertaken them, upon three small provincial houses which were presumably willing to undertake the work at a cheaper rate.¹

Moreover, early in the sixteenth century, a Parisian Celestine wrote a treatise *On the Union of Obits*, printed for the first time by Molinier (p. 325). In full scholastic form, it attempts to justify what his Order had now been doing for nearly a century; and one of his arguments rests on the assertion that the practice was very common in other quarters also. Molinier summarizes these arguments on pp. 139 ff., and ends with a judgement which will probably be endorsed by everybody who has ploughed through the original. "These, with all due respect to Fr Rapine, are simply so many sophisms; out of the four cases he proposes, two alone are legitimate. . . . The study of this memorial has its interest from another point of view; it is a good example of the arguments of ancient casuists, and some of the arguments of this Celestine monk are worthy of the Jesuits whom Pascal treated so roughly."

This story of the Celestines is perhaps exceptional in its wholesale character, and certainly in the special papal sanction given to it; but Molinier quotes so many other examples as to show how common these repudiations were on a smaller scale and in complete secret. Nor did this "whitewashing" really settle the problem of liturgical bankruptcy; on the contrary, matters seem to have grown worse and worse. The Council of Aix in Provence (1585) complained

it befalleth oftentimes in certain churches [*ecclesiis*, which includes monasteries] that either so great a number of Masses to be celebrated has been imposed by various legacies of dead folk that it is impossible to satisfy them for all the days prescribed by the testators, or else

¹ Molinier, *loc. cit.* p. 321; cf. p. 150 n. 1.

that the fees for celebrating them are so slender that it is difficult to find any man who will subject himself to this duty; wherethrough the pious wishes of testators are destroyed, and occasion is given for burdening the consciences of them whom these things concern.

But the only remedy suggested is, that bishops shall do their best to make an equitable composition between soul-debitor and soul-creditor.¹ The Premonstratensian Order was generally, like the Cistercian, a little less relaxed than the older Benedictines and Augustinians; yet its official spokesman at the Synod of Poissy (1561) confessed the neglect of innumerable Masses.²

For the principle remained untouched; and the consequent temptations were overwhelming. Dom Guiard tells us of the increasing insolvency in his own day (1757). He writes:

Others, although overburdened already, seize [fresh Masses] with both hands, without taking the trouble to say them. I have known communities in which the sacristans counted their arrears of Masses not by dozens or by hundreds, but by thousands, and who nevertheless never dreamed of refusing any fees that were offered to them.... I have known others who gave twenty per cent. to women of trust, who were busy to find [those who would order Masses], under the specious pretext of a novena or of devotion to some image or altar or church; others, again, who offered to pay their gambling debts by saying a certain number of Masses.³

We have a concrete example from about this same time which corroborates Guiard. At the abbey of St-Claude, in 1721, the Archbishop of Lyons formally permitted the brethren to reduce their Masses in consideration of their reduced numbers. The 1973 to which one of their priories was yearly pledged were now cut down, at a single stroke, to 365. Yet the abbey was still immensely rich, and it would have been a very small burden to hire four secular priests, who could have celebrated these 1608

¹ Richard, *Analysis Conciliorum*, IV, 395.

² Le Paige, p. 964. For details in slightly later years see pp. 995, 1000, 1004, 1006, 1010, 1014, 1027, 1031, 1034, 1038, 1041, 1045, 1049, 1053, 1056, 1058.

³ P. 305. This same accusation had been made among the *Gravamina* brought forward by the German Nation at the Diet of Nürnberg in 1522-3 (86). On this point the Jesuit reviewer here protests that 90 per cent. of the Masses "come of their own accord, without other fee than the customary tariff either by regulation or by the use of the diocese". To which Guiard answers that, even if we admit this criticism, there are 10 per cent. of offenders, and these would amount to millions, perhaps, in the whole church.

suppressed Masses.¹ This reduction, it must be noted, affected only one of the many priories; the total numbers neglected probably came to many thousands a year.

Here, then, is the summary of Molinier, whose studies have given him most right to speak on this subject (pp. 146ff.). He is confining himself almost entirely to the medieval evidence.

I have made a point of borrowing these examples from the archives of a well-lettered and active community, which was always flourishing and whose domains were always intelligently administered. What must have been the fate of obits founded in the ancient Benedictine abbeys, most of which, from the 14th century onwards, were smitten with irremediable decay? Far be it from me, however, to accuse the churches of bad faith. It would be superfluous here to examine whether many of the contracts made for [Mass] foundations were not tainted with simony, in the strict sense of the word;² but we must recognize that it would be excessive to demand from the communities those religious services whose endowments had disappeared... However this may be, the examination of the manuscripts shows that, through reductions brought about by successive unions, the majority of the ancient anniversaries founded in great religious communities finished by disappearing [here come two pages of separate cases]. These examples suffice to prove my thesis: *viz.* that the perpetuity of the prayers promised by the Church to her benefactors was never real; it was in vain that solemn contracts seemed to secure this; neither the givers nor the priests or monks who had received the gifts had foreseen the inevitable changes which years bring into human transactions. Sometimes the disappearance of the rent or of the property legitimated the suppression of the obit; sometimes the diminution of the rent excused the reduction and simplification of the funeral service; but nobody who knows the state of the French churches during the last years of the Middle Ages will find it easy to believe that these reductions or suppressions were managed everywhere in an equitable and regular fashion. More than one anniversary must have ceased to be celebrated through negligence or relaxation of Church discipline. Who does not know the deplorable situation of the Benedictine abbeys at the end of the 16th century? Many of these houses escaped the reforms of St-Maur and St-Vanne, and vegetated obscurely until the verge of the Revolution. Long before the decrees of the National Assembly commanding that Church property should be restored to the nation, both ecclesiastical authorities and the

¹ Benoit, *St-Claude*, II: I printed the original in vol. 1, p. 490.

² It is plain that Dom Guiard would judge that they were; that the business bargain rested definitely on the principle of buying spiritual gifts for money.

secular powers had treated this property as a sort of reserve... Amid these constant changes of ownership, what became of obits founded in the Middle Ages by obscure citizens or knights? It was only the powerful communities, such as cathedral chapters or great abbeys, who still kept the memory of a few of their benefactors. In conclusion, this institution of anniversaries began to decay in the fourteenth century, at the very moment when their numbers were multiplying and their celebration became a complicated task. That decay was accentuated as time went on; and, on that day when the Revolution transferred Church property abruptly from one hand to another, there were but faint traces left of all these foundations which their authors might have believed to be everlasting. As the Ecclesiast has said (III, 1) *All things have their season, and in their times all things pass under heaven.*¹

The story may be rounded off with instances from Cambridge collegiate life, which cast incidental light upon men's attitude towards foundation-Masses on the verge of the Reformation. In 1487, a cleric named Bassett gave land in Babraham to St Catharine's College for the foundation of a fellowship; the fellow on this foundation, and his successors, were "to pray and celebrate specially, for all future time, for the salvation of the soul" of the founder and his kinsfolk. If, at this fellow's death, the college let eight weeks pass without appointing a successor to these duties, then Clare College might enter forthwith into possession of the lands "and expel therefrom, totally and in all perpetuity, the master and fellows of St Catharine's or their successors", making themselves thenceforth responsible for the prayers and Masses. If Clare, in its turn, neglected them, then Corpus Christi might effect the same perpetual and total expulsion of the idle husbandmen from this vineyard. The thirteen other similar pre-Reformation Mass-endowments all contain similar penalties for precaution, except two only, which provide only for one Mass a year.²

The whole of this story shows how dangerous it is to judge of Church methods in the Middle Ages by what we see around us in modern society. Foundation-Masses are now on a strictly business footing; they are definitely recorded for each church

¹ For plain words of condemnation from a great Roman Catholic liturgist of modern times, see Appendix.

² H. Philpott, *Documents Relating to St Catharine's College* (1861), pp. 41-89.

or altar, and books are kept in which the celebrants must "sign on", and which the Visitors can check. Moreover, the question which Gerson and Claude Rapine debated so painfully has since been decided at headquarters. Urban VIII (1625) decided that a priest must say as many Masses as he has received fees. "The council of Narbonne, in 1609, forbade under pain of excommunication the reception of more than one fee for a single Mass; and Pope Alexander VII, in 1665, condemned the proposition which authorized a traffic which had so little foundation and which was so unworthy of the priesthood."¹

¹ Migne, *Dict. Droit Canon*, II, col. 522; cf. Guiard, p. 284.

CHAPTER VI

RELICS

FROM Masses, we may naturally pass on to relics as a source of monastic income¹.

One of the greatest medievalists of our day, writing of France in [1200], says:

The true religion of the middle age, to be frank, is the worship of relics. How could men of that time raise themselves to the metaphysical and moral conceptions of Christian doctrine? To the masses religion was the veneration of the remains of saints or of objects which had been used by Jesus or the Virgin. It was believed that divine intervention in human affairs manifested itself especially through the power of relics. Therefore, hardly anything was done, whether in public or private life, without having recourse to the protection or the guarantee of these sacred objects.²

In that epigrammatic form, the verdict would need as much natural discount as the parallel verdict of Rashdall on religious education.

So much party capital has at times been made out of the supposed "religious" character of the medieval Universities that it is necessary to assert emphatically that the "religious education" of a "bygone Oxford", in so far as it ever had any existence, was an inheritance not from the Middle Ages but from the Reformation. In Catholic Europe it was the product of the Counter-Reformation.³

But we may see how much truth there is in both verdicts (underlying that exaggeration which is unavoidable on one side or another when we characterize in a few sentences the story of a whole Continent for a dozen centuries) by considering in detail the part that relics played in monastic economy and policy and religion. It is true that many monks came as near to perfection in their monasteries as Marcus Aurelius in his palace or

¹ An excellent article on this subject may be found in Hastings's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, x, 653, by Dr J. A. MacCulloch, who gives an extensive bibliography on p. 658.

² *Social France at the Time of Philip Augustus* (1912), p. 28. The original is perhaps a little stronger: "La vraie religion du moyen âge, il ne faut pas s'y tromper, c'est le culte des reliques."

³ *Universities of Europe* (1895), II, 701.

Washington in the presidency or Wilberforce in the House of Commons; but it is quite as important, though much more laborious, to seek a comprehension of the average mind.

Medieval relic-worship had not grown up quite unopposed. Apart from ridicule from without the Church, it was attacked from within by Vigilantius [410], whose treatise we know only from St Jerome's angry reply: this sacrilegious fellow "opens his fetid mouth and spits filth against the relics of the holy martyrs, calling us dustmen for treasuring them, and idolaters because we venerate the bones of the dead". St Jerome evidently represented the sense of the great majority; for the practice, so far from suffering a check, grew to enormous proportions. At last, however, in [830], Bishop Claudius of Turin wrote a treatise which was condemned by a Church synod in his lifetime and was vehemently attacked after his death by Jonas, Bishop of Orléans [845]. This, again, survives only in the extracts quoted by his adversaries; but these show that, among other things offensive to the advancing spirit of his age, he reprobated relic-worship. Jonas, on this point as on others, places him unhesitatingly among the heretics, and argues: "As Jerome writeth against Vigilantius, demons howl at the ashes of martyrs, and flee away from the bodies into which they have entered; and many other miracles, beyond number, are wrought by their intervention and prayers and with the co-operation of Christ's grace."¹ Long before this, it had become a rule that every altar should have one or more relics enclosed in it.² The *loculus*, or nook in which it was kept, was doubtless nearly always known; but not by any means always the name, and still less the history, of the saint from whose body or clothes it had come. It may be said, I think, without any exaggeration that, on the whole, the most eminent relics in the Middle Ages were those whose pedigree is least capable of sustaining strict historical examination. Erasmus, in his *Colloquy* on pilgrimages, does not go beyond historical precedent when he describes the evidence offered to him at Walsingham for the authenticity of the Virgin's house and the Virgin's milk.³ In those days of uncertain and

¹ Migne, *P.L.* cv1, col. 327. ² Gratian, *Decretum*, pars III, dist. i, c. 26.

³ *Peregrinatio Religionis ergo*. In the 1877 edition of Nathan Bailey's translation of the *Colloquies*, selections from which might well be reprinted, the episodes come on pp. 243-5.

conflicting traditions, monks had an enormous advantage not only over the laity but even over the secular clergy; they were ubiquitous, and they were clannish, sometimes to the verge of ferocity. It is no wonder, therefore, that the monks got the lion's share of relics; indeed, the *inventio* of a great relic was sometimes equivalent to a second foundation-deed for the fortunate monastery.

We cannot do better here than to start from St-Denis, the royal monastery *par excellence*, which boasted the body of that Dionysius the Areopagite who had argued with St Paul. Abailard, it is true, attracted persecution within the monastery by his bold scepticism on this point; but there was no doubt in the mind of the multitude, or in Abailard's contemporary Suger, one of the greatest of French abbots and statesmen. King Dagobert (622-38) had held St-Denis in special reverence, had heaped gifts upon the shrine, and had built a church of exceeding richness, with which no fault could be found but that, in process of time, it proved too small. Therefore Suger, having practically doubled the revenues of the monastery by his remarkable administration and his weight both in church and state, set himself to rebuild the minster during the years 1141-4. This building is often cited as the first Gothic (as opposed to Romanesque) church in Europe; and Suger himself has left a statement of his reasons for the reconstruction.¹

As the numbers of the faithful increased, and pressed more and more to implore the help of the saints, the minster [of Dagobert] was wont to suffer such difficulties that oftentimes, on solemn holy-days, it was full to overflowing, and poured forth by every door a crowd of struggling persons, so that not only were those who would have entered debarred from the entrance, but even those who were within were driven out by such as had gone before them. Men might sometimes see, marvellous to relate! how, while men strove to go in and kiss and worship those holy relics, the Nail and the Crown of our Lord, the dense multitude strove so hard against them that, among these numberless thousands of folk, not one could stir a single foot by reason of the press: for each was so constricted that he could only stand like a marble statue, spell-bound, and free only to cry aloud. Meanwhile the women were in so great and intolerable anguish that, finding themselves crushed among these strong men as

¹ *Œuvres*, p. 216; a briefer description on p. 186.

in a wine-press, they seemed to see death before their eyes; the blood fled from their faces, they cried terribly as though in the throes of childbirth; and, in many cases, when they were miserably trodden under foot, by kindly help of the men they were raised over the heads of the crowd and walked there as on a pavement; many also lay gasping at their last breath in the cloister-garth. Moreover the brethren themselves who exposed to all comers these tokens of our Lord's passion, succumbing under their tribulations and contentions, and finding no other refuge, often escaped with the relics through the windows. When first, as a schoolboy in the hands of my monastic teachers, I heard these things, then I grieved as a youth standing without; afterwards, in riper age, I earnestly desired that they should be corrected.

At this time he could count on a steady income of 150 *livres* a year from the relics for his building operations, apart from other uses to which that revenue might be applied (p. 226). When the minster had been rebuilt and enriched with all the jewels and precious church ornaments which he enumerates, the offerings must have increased enormously; for all our records show the cumulative effect of popular veneration.

Perhaps the most conspicuous English example is Bromholm, at Bacton on the Norfolk coast. In 1223, the miracles wrought at this shrine attracted such attention that Roger of Wendover heard of them at St Albans, and felt it his duty to hand down to posterity an account of this treasure, granted by God's grace to so remote a corner of the world. Baldwin, the first Latin emperor of the East, perished in 1206 at the battle of Hadrianople; but (writes Roger of Wendover; R.S. II, 274)

there was at that time [with Baldwin] a certain English chaplain who celebrated Mass in the Emperor's chapel with his clergy; and this man was among the custodians of the Emperor's relics and rings and other possessions. When therefore he heard by common report of his Emperor's death, he stole away secretly from Constantinople with the aforesaid relics and rings and other possessions, and reached England. He came to St Albans, where he sold to a monk of that house a silver-gilt cross, with two fingers of St Margaret and some gold rings and precious stones; all of which are now held in great veneration at St Albans Abbey. Then the said chaplain, drawing from his sleeve a certain cross of wood, showed it to some of the monks, affirming upon his solemn oath that this was beyond doubt made from the very wood whereon the Saviour of the World hung for the redemption of mankind; but, seeing that his words were not believed

at St Albans, he departed thence, bearing with him, little as men knew it, a treasure beyond all price. Now this said priest had two little sons, whom he was most eager to nourish and foster; wherefore he offered his Cross to many monasteries on condition that he and his sons should there be taken in as monks. Having been repulsed in many monasteries among the rich, he came at last to a cell called Bromholm, miserably poor and destitute of all buildings, in the County of Norfolk. There he called together the prior with some of the brethren, and showed them the Cross aforesaid, made from two transverse pieces of wood of about the length of a man's hand: therewith he besought in all humility that he and his sons might be received as monks, together with this Cross and his other relics which he had. So the prior and brethren, rejoicing in so great a treasure, by the grace of God, who doth ever cherish honest poverty, gave credence to this chaplain, and, reverently receiving this Wood of our Lord, bore it to their church, and kept it in the most honourable place with all possible devotion. So at last, in this aforesaid year [1223], divine miracles began to be wrought in the aforesaid priory to the praise and glory of the life-bringing Cross; for dead folk were restored to life, the blind saw, the lame walked, lepers were cleansed, those possessed by devils were freed; and, whosoever might be the sick man who came to that Cross with faith, he departed whole and sound. So the aforesaid Cross is frequented, adored and worshipped not only by the English nation but also by men of far-off lands; and those who have heard what divine miracles it works do most devoutly revere it.

In 1234, Henry III came to worship it at Bromholm.¹ The result was natural. Wendover may very well have unconsciously coloured the narrative; the last part he confessedly knew only by contemporary hearsay, probably through the St Albans' cell of Binham, some 25 miles from Bromholm. But Ralph of Coggeshall, who gives an independent account, differing in minor particulars, is even more emphatic as to the effect of these miracles.² The priory, he says, rose suddenly from its state of "poverty and destitution of all temporal goods"; men came first "from all quarters of Britain"; and then

no less migration and concourse were made to this place, from different nations, than had long been customary to St Thomas [of Canterbury] or to Bury St Edmunds. . . . Thus, from this poor little convent of Bromholm, scarce known to any man but its neighbours, there grew, when the old buildings had been destroyed, a new and

¹ M. Paris, *Chron. Maj.* R.S. III, 80, 271; Dugdale-Caley, v, 60 ff.

² R.S. 202.

noble edifice, of the highest renown, and specially noted for its expenses and its hospitality.

In the long run it could not hold its own with Canterbury; yet its prosperity for many generations was great. We know on documentary evidence that Bromholm had originally only seven or eight monks, sent thither from the parent priory of Castleacre, and that it was under such strict subjection as the Cluniac Rule demanded from such dependent cells. Yet, within five years or so from this outburst of miracles, they were already rebelling (as the Castleacre monks complained) against these their legal superiors. In 1229, after prolonged litigation, Gregory IX's commissioners effected a compromise between the two priories. Thenceforth Bromholm was incomparably more celebrated than Castleacre; Edward II gave it valuable privileges; Chaucer mentions it; and in *Piers Plowman* it is put side by side with Walsingham as a famous Sanctuary. Boniface IX, in 1401, gave to those who worshipped at Bromholm, on Passion Sunday and the three days before and after, the same indulgence as he gave to St Mark's at Venice;¹ and Capgrave, writing about 1450, credits this Holy Cross with 27 resurrections from the dead.²

Some of the richest monasteries in Europe could tell a similar story. Santiago de Compostela was an insignificant spot until the belief in St James's body grew: then immediately (if its chartulary is to be trusted), King Alfonso II gave it the whole territory for three miles round St James's tomb—the Spanish mile being far more than the English [820]. Another king, in 854, extended this to a radius of six miles. A third, in 924, extended it to twelve miles. The monastery was now so great that it was made into a bishopric, and, in 1120, an archbishopric. Innocent III, in 1207, was begged to deal with the difficulty "that, since pilgrims come from divers regions to Santiago, and since some vindicate against others the nightly guard of the altar [at which offerings are made] by contentions and quarrels,

¹ Miss C. M. Ady points out to me that Boniface IX, at the petition of Giovanni Bentivoglio, granted that one of the churches at Bologna should have a yearly Jubilee on the 4th Sunday in Lent "like the Jubilee which the church of St Mark at Venice has" (Archivio di Stato, Bologna, *Provisioni e Riformazioni*, sec. XIII, etc., 15 Feb. 1402).

² *Chron. Anglie*, R.S. pp. 201-3. For the Holy Cross of Waltham Abbey, see Bishop Stubbs's edition of the twelfth-century treatise *De Inventione Sanctae Crucis Nostrae* (Oxford 1861).

therefore sometimes manslaughter is committed and sometimes wounds are inflicted".¹ The absurdities invented to explain the presence at a remote Spanish village of a saint certainly executed at Jerusalem may be found in the words of a modern traveller². Bishop Hefele, the most distinguished Roman Catholic scholar who has dealt with it, practically abandons the case.³ Yet Santiago grew from century to century and, in 1478, Sixtus IV decreed that the pilgrimage to Compostela might be reckoned equivalent to that of Rome or Jerusalem. The whole or part of the same St James has been claimed also for Ancona, Trois-Maries in Provence, Rome and Toulouse.⁴ Another place which owes almost its existence to a famous relic is Loreto with its *Santa Casa*, which has been dealt with critically and, it may be said, destructively by Abbé Ulysse Chevalier. A similar critical sketch of the 11,000 virgins at Cologne may be found summarized in the *Revue Historique* (1930), CLXIV, 148. The author traces the story from A.D. [400], when it was revealed to a certain Clematius that "holy virgins", martyrs, reposed there. Thence "the legend passed from mouth to mouth, from hagiographer to hagiographer, growing like a snowball". Then, in the ninth century, some copyist recorded these traditional "XI virgines" with a bar over the $\overline{\text{XI}}$, for emphasis, such an overline bar being used in the Middle Ages to attract attention just as we underline a word nowadays. In this case, it attracted even too much attention, for the superior bar is also used to express thousands, and thus some other copyist understood it. Thenceforward the homely original 11 stood no chance with this new 11,000; and thus we have Carpaccio's and Memling's splendid pictures of the Princess Ursula and her 10,999 companions on their way to martyrdom. The process by which "a certain king whose name God knows"—*rex Deo notus*—entered into the legend and was identified by a great chronicler as "King Nothus", is equally curious to trace. Then, in 1106, a Roman cemetery was discovered near Cologne; these multitudinous bones were obviously those of the 11,000. But inscriptions, and

¹ H. Florez, *España Sagrada* (1765), XIX, 329, 335.

² *Fraser's Magazine* (1864), LXX, 234.

³ *Herder's Kirchenlexikon*, s.v. *Compostela*, see Appendix.

⁴ Tillemont, *Mém. Hist. Ecclés.* (1701), I, 381.

even the skeletons themselves, testified to the presence of men and children; thus a whole crowd of attendants came into the legend; it only remained for a fraudulent sacristan to invent a host of outlandish names and anecdotes, and for two visionaries to solicit heaven for further information which could not be found on earth; thus, by about 1225, the legend was complete.

Other churches, though the analysis of their legends is less romantic to the historian, drew from them even greater financial advantage. Fleury (St-Benoît-sur-Loire) was insignificant until the advent, real or fictitious, of the bones of St Benedict. The chronicler of Vézelay tells a similar story concerning the bones of St Mary Magdalene. In the early twelfth century many churches in central and southern France benefited from a legend that Lazarus and the Magdalene had landed with a group of companions in Provence. The modern historian of Vézelay can thus write:

Perhaps it would never have emerged from the obscurity which shrouded its first years, if, in the eleventh century, the report had not spread abroad that it possessed the relics of St Mary Magdalene. . . . The one certainty is that Magdalene-worship did not appear at Vézelay until the middle of the eleventh century, and that this marks the origin of the abbey's astounding fortune. Popes themselves implicitly encouraged this new belief. . . . No more was needed, in those times, to attract an enormous crowd of visitors to Vézelay. Thenceforward pilgrims came in crowds; and, with them, offerings and donations of every description. . . . At the end of the eleventh century, this abbey was one of the most powerful and opulent in France.¹

Equally remarkable, and no less profitable, was the discovery of St-Claude's incorrupt body. St Bernard (d. 1142) wrote to his old pupil, Pope Eugenius III, in favour of St-Oyend in the Jura. The monastery, owning possessions of immense extent, though difficult to manage amid mountains and forests, and having numerous dependent cells, had fallen upon evil days. St Bernard wrote:

This noble abbey, once famous for its wealth and religion, is verging upon ruin, if that be true which is reported: and we cannot disbelieve all. We daily see, and grieve to see, its dependent houses

¹ Ch. Porée, *L'Abbaye de Vézelay*, p. 8; *Bulletin de la Soc. des Sciences, etc. de l'Yonne* (1862), p. 226; cf. *Description des villes et campagnes de l'Yonne* (Auxerre, 1882), pp. 239-40. In 1283 there were three rival corpses of St Mary Magdalene—at Ste-Baume, Sinigaglia, and Vézelay.

near unto us [at Clairvaux] and well known unto you, partly already destroyed and partly on the road to ruin....Report speaks even worse of the head [abbey] than what we see ourselves among these dependencies....I have liberated my soul; but this is not enough, until the abbey also be liberated. Its life and death lie in your hands.¹

The rest may be given in summary from the abbey's historian.²



Inventio of St-Claude

From the windows of the cathedral of St-Claude. The glass is modern, but it represents accurately the scene as described in the legend.

¹ *Epp.* CCXCI; *P.L.* CLXXXII, col. 496.

² D. P. Benoît, *Hist. de l'abbaye et de la terre de St-Claude*, printed by the Carthusians of Montreuil (1890), I, 518. This book, in two very bulky volumes, is of immense labour and of great value in spite of its occasionally uncritical spirit. He misdates, for instance, St Bernard's death.

It is possible that the desolation which moved St Bernard was due in part to quarrels for the abbacy; the thirteenth-century author of the *Miracles of St-Claude* speaks of fatal intestine discords under Ado, who ruled from 1149 onwards: each party despoiled the abbey; which "was left weeping and lamenting in its miserable desolation, stripped bare of precious plate and ornaments and with its flock dispersed abroad". At last, in or after 1175, Pope and emperor combined to depose Ado, and an excellent abbot was elected in Aymo, who "finding the sheep feeble and dispersed, strove with God's help to patch up the broken sheepfold". In this he was helped by a providential event. To quote Benoît again:

The tomb of St-Claude was opened, we know not in what circumstances or exactly in which year; probably about 1160, as several indications suggest and as the majority of historians have conjectured.¹ O marvel! the venerable body was found whole and incorrupt, although it bore no traces of embalment in the strict sense, and although it had been committed to the earth nearly five centuries earlier. This prodigy at once aroused singular confidence among the faithful. Miracles responded to this devotion. The news of this preservation for centuries, and the report of the earliest cures, were promptly noised abroad. There was as it were an explosion of joy and a rising of hope among the people. St-Claude appeared to all [in the words of the ancient prayer] as "the consoler of the afflicted, liberator of captives, raiser from the dead, light of the blind, giver of hearing to the deaf, and of speech to the dumb, saviour of the shipwrecked, succourer of monks and nuns, healer of the sick, strengthener of the weak, the refuge of all those who trust in his charity". Then, before the Saint's glorious tomb, began that long procession of people which lasted until the French Revolution and the sacrilegious destruction of his venerable body. Then began that innumerable series of miracles which popularized the name of St-Claude throughout France, and especially in Burgundy; which earned him from popular enthusiasm the title of "Miracle-Worker", *Patrator Miraculorum*, and which led Franche-Comté to adopt him as its second patron saint.

From that time forward the abbey of St-Oyend was called "of St-Oyend and St-Claude", until presently the newer saint completely absorbed the old. It became one of the richest of all

¹ He supplies no citation from the documents implying this early date. These, so far as I can see, leave it more probable that the opening—always a very solemn undertaking—took place under the pious Aymo.

European monasteries, and the most tenacious of all in France, down to the Revolution, of its feudal rights over the numerous serfs on its domains.¹ For the equally strange, and very profitable invention of the Holy Cross at Peebles, see *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 69. I have given, on p. 4 of my *Life in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, the monk Glaber's description of the wave of relic-finding in [1030], with the picture, probably drawn by Matthew Paris himself, of the exhumation of Offa's bones at St Albans. These discoveries coincide very happily with the financial needs and the religious enthusiasm of any particular place. At the great abbey of St-Père-de-Chartres the rebuilding had come to a standstill for want of funds, when the monks opportunely broke into a vault at the foundations, and discovered the body of St Gilduin. "The miracles that were immediately worked at this tomb attracted many rich offerings, which permitted them to continue the rebuilding."² These opportune "inventions", celebrated with lyric enthusiasm at the abbey itself, not infrequently aroused the jealous scepticism of outsiders. John of Oxenedes, himself a Norfolk monk, records a French case in 1154. "At the monastery of Argenteuil near Paris there was discovered the seamless robe of our Saviour, as it is said; and the common folk believe and proclaim this even to the present day" [1290].³ Very similar was the attitude of the Franciscan Salimbene towards the Benedictines of Bobbio, who boasted "one of the water-pots wherein the Lord turned water into wine at the wedding-feast, for it is said to be one of them. Whether it be so indeed, God knoweth, to whose eyes all things are naked and open".⁴

We cannot, of course, separate the relics from the miracles which they wrought. Here we are in a field so wide, and so well known, that it may be left to itself, with the exception of two corners less familiar than most, and more directly concerned with monastic finance.

¹ Cf. *Medieval Village*, pp. 162, 468, 476. Servitude had, indeed, become by that time less onerous than the state of the average medieval serf; but it was nevertheless very strange to modern society.

² *Cart. St-Père*, introd. p. ccxlix.

³ *Oxenedes*, R.S. (1859), p. 51. Similar cases of scepticism are noted by Hauck, *K.G. Deutschlands* (1913), IV, 76 n. 7.

⁴ *MGH. Scriptt.* xxxii, 332; *From St F. to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 183. For other notices of relics in Salimbene's *Chronicle* see *ibid.* pp. 267, 273, 291, 307-8, 311, 313.

In the first place, some of the most pious monastic disciplinarians were distinctly unfavourable to the multiplication of miracles. It was not only that they felt, with St Gregory the Great and St Odo of Cluny, the religious and evidential inferiority of "corporeal" miracles as compared with the moral miracle of the sinner's conversion.¹ That, and the admitted fact that the devil also could work apparent physical miracles, went for something; but there was much also in the obvious danger of connecting miracles with popularity and pride and financial gain. Therefore the body of St Pardulf at Sarlat "inviting, by many miraculous signs, crowds of people [to the monastery], smote the religious monks there with nausea".² St Hildulf of Senones found his abbey so troubled by popular concourse to the miracle-working tomb of St Spinulus, that he commanded him to cease, and the dead saint obeyed. Similar prohibitions were laid, with equal success, upon St Robert of Chaise-Dieu, St Gibrien, and St Barboux.³ St Bernard was forbidden to work further miracles by his successor at Clairvaux; and St Stephen, the founder of Grammont, by a prior who came after him. St Stephen, after those chapters of his Rule which enjoin abstinence from parochial revenues, from encroachment upon more lands than they need, from the possession of flocks and herds, from bargain-driving, from taking interest upon loans, and from pleas in the lawcourts, added a blessing and a warning.

This which I say unto you is the key of your Religion; and, if ye keep this well, the enemy will find no opening to creep in among you... Those who at first shall hate you, when ye begin to inhabit these desert places, shall afterwards love you and heap benefits upon you. But this I say unto you on condition that ye remain faithfully in this manner of life. If, however, ye depart from God, will it not be just that all should persecute you?⁴

This severity of life was maintained for a little while after St Stephen's death. For instance, when the canons of Ambazac, four months after the Saint's death (1124), laid claim to the

¹ I have dealt fully with this in *Christ, St Francis and To-Day*, pp. 26 ff.

² Martène, *Comment. in Reg. cap.* 66 (ed. 1690, p. 866). My other instances, where no other reference is given, come from the same source.

³ Thiers, *Expos. du S. Sacrement* (1777), I, 437. Thiers contrasts these examples with the natural desire of contemporary Religious to attract the greatest possible crowds.

⁴ Martène, *Antiq. Mon. Rit.* (1764), p. 312, c. 25; *P.L.* CCIV, col. 1149.

house in which he and his disciples had lived for fifty years, then they preferred yielding to bringing the case into the courts; they prayed that God would tell them, as He had told Abraham, whither to go; and Providence pointed towards a neighbouring hill, where they settled on the rough ground and built themselves rude huts. Thither they brought St Stephen's body, and buried it under the steps of the altar. The miracles worked there encouraged such a concourse of people as to threaten the original simplicity of the Order; therefore the prior came to the tomb and thus addressed St Stephen's relics:

Servant of God, thou hast shown us the way of poverty, and hast taught us with all thy might to walk therein. Wilt thou now, by thy miracles, withdraw us from the steep and narrow way which leadeth unto life, into that broad and easy road which leadeth unto death? . . . We are not curious to see thy miracles; we are sufficiently persuaded of thy holiness. Therefore, take heed lest thou continue to work these miracles which, while exalting thy sanctity, make us to lose our humility. Be not so careful of thine own glory as to neglect our salvation. Otherwise we tell you, and we proclaim it firmly, in virtue of that obedience which we promised unto thee, that we will disinter thy bones from hence and cast them into the river.

The biographer implies that this adjuration was successful.¹ Yet, in 1189, when he was formally canonized, the inhabitants of Thiers, his native place, begged for a portion of his bones, and received a whole arm, which they preserved with the greatest veneration.²

In close conformity with this, three parallels may be added from Franciscan history.

Brother Pietro Cattani, having ruled the Order for a while as St Francis's vicar, quitted this life before the Saint; and, in St Francis's absence, he was buried at the church of St Mary of the Portiuncula. But seeing that he shone forth with many miracles, and for that reason a multitude of people flocked to that church with their offerings, therefore the Saint, having come back to the Portiuncula, was saddened by those offerings and the multitude of visitors; and, coming to the tomb, he spake: "Brother Peter, thou wast ever obedient unto me in thy lifetime; thou shouldst obey me now also, seeing that we are sore troubled with these secular folk. Wherefore

¹ *P.L.* CCIV, col. 1030.

² *AA.SS. Boll.* Feb. vol. II.

I command thee, by that obedience, to cease from these miracles of thine, by reason whereof we are molested by these secular folk." And, thenceforward, he wrought no miracle.

The next case was in [1230]. The then General Minister was Brother Elias, who

noting that Brother William the Englishman, a lay brother who had been perfect in Religion, and had been buried in the Basilica of St Francis, shone forth with great miracles, was moved with jealousy for St Francis and came to his [William's] tomb. Then he commanded the dead man with great confidence and faith to cease from obscuring the glory of the holy Father St Francis by his own miracles. Thenceforward he wrought not one more.¹

Again, in [1249], at Wiener Neustadt, there died one "brother Conrad, a holy man and great miracle-worker. But, because he was not buried with the brethren [in the friars' cloister], the Minister commanded him after his death to work no miracles, and thenceforward he wrought none". Salimbene, again, tells us concerning both St Francis's close friend Brother Giles, and Brother Nicholas of Montefeltro, a friar of exceeding sanctity, that no miracle was wrought at their tombs, because they had prayed God to work none.² The Carthusian Order supplies yet another instance.³ We may contrast this with the ordinary point of view—e.g. at Canterbury in 1445, where the bones suddenly woke up and worked a striking miracle "lest the glory of the glorious martyr Thomas should lurk under the darkness of ignorance".⁴

The second significance of miracles for monastic economics is their enormous influence, at least at occasional favourable moments, over the very wildest minds. The multitudinous collections of stories—for almost every great shrine had its own Book of Miracles—contain an enormous proportion of vindictive anecdotes. I have pointed out already (vol. 1, p. 245) how out of the 139 stories in the *Miracles de St-Benoît* at Fleury, 69 are

¹ *Chron. XXIV. Gen.* (Quaracchi, 1897), pp. 31, 217, 245. By a rare chance a portrait of Brother William has been preserved in Matthew Paris's chronicle, probably by Matthew's own hand. It is reproduced, by kind permission of the British Society of Franciscan Studies, to face p. 168 of my second volume.

² *M.G.H. Scriptt.* xxxii, 557.

³ P. Dorlandus, *Chronicon Cartusianum* (1608), p. 208.

⁴ *Lit. Cant.* III, 192.

of this description. Giraldus Cambrensis, himself a Celt of the Celts, records with a certain pride how the relics preserved by the Celtic Church "are in great reverence among both clergy and people in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, so that they are far more afraid to swear false oaths over such relics than over the Gospels". And Giraldus adds an explanation which has double force from the pen of a really learned and far from uncritical Welshman: "For", he says, "owing to a certain occult power, seemingly granted them from God, and owing to the vindictiveness to which those saints, above all others, seem prone, those who despise them are oftentimes punished."¹ Therefore it was very common to compel litigants to swear not on the Gospels, but on the relics of the monastery; a course which was felt to give great advantage to that party. At the Welsh abbey of Margam, it was evidently the common custom to demand oath upon the abbey relics; so also at Neath.² The Frankish kings used to cause the relics of St Martin to be borne about from province to province, in order that all oaths of fidelity might be made upon these objects of peculiar sanctity.³ St Cuthbert's vengeance is celebrated in *Rites of Durham*, p. 1903; and the Scots, by their own confession, held him in especial awe.⁴ Columban was a Celtic saint; and a monk in his monastery of Bobbio, writing in the tenth century, relates how it had been oppressed by wicked princes and nobles during the earlier and still more troublous centuries. The monks resolved, therefore, to bear the body of their founder to the princes at Pavia, "in order that they, seeing how this most sacred body had itself been brought thither on account of its own business, might thus at least be brought to cease from their rapacity". They reached the court after many miracles on the way; St Columban cured the queen's son of a fever; other miraculous cures followed; and, whenever God thus showed His power, the cathedral bells were set ringing, and were followed by all other churches in the city.

¹ *It. Cambriae* (opp. R.S. VI, 27), lib. I, c. 2.

² W. De Gray Birch, *Margam*, pp. 5, 6, 28, 33, and so on down to p. 275 (A.D. 1262); *Neath*, pp. 71-2. See also *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 68 (Melrose).

³ Thomassinus, pars I, lib. II, c. 109, § 2.

⁴ See *Scottish Abbeys*, pp. 70 ff., and compare Thorne's account of Edward I and St Mildred's vengeance (col. 1962); also *Chron. Casinense* in *P.L.* LXXIII, col. 926.

But the hearts of the princes were still hardened; it was not enough that they had spoiled St Columban's lands

but they even began to backbite this holy body with venomous tongues; and some among them said, "We will not let go the possessions which ye seek, by reason of these horses' or asses' bones which ye have brought hither."

Then one of them was smitten with sudden madness; he besought the saint's help, bound himself with a leather thong to the bier, and recovered his senses.

By these events, all that stood by saw how divine vengeance was wreaked upon injuries done to the man of God; therefore some of the aforesaid princes came to the most holy body, and each laid a stick in the wallet [which accompanied it], in order that all men might plainly see how they restored to St Columban those possessions which they had hitherto unjustly invaded.¹

In the sixteenth century, it became necessary to forbid the carrying of relics on solemn processions at the same time as the sacred Host, whenever "the bishop sees that the people have such inordinate devotion to certain images or relics of the saints, that their exterior behaviour clearly proves them to give to the saints' images, rather than to the Venerable Host itself, that honour which is due to the Holy Sacrament".²

Next in value to the *inventio* of a relic—or sometimes, perhaps, even greater—was its *translatio*; that is, its solemn transference to a more conspicuous position and a costlier shrine; a ceremony which often earned a papal bull of indulgence to all who should worship and offer at the spot. The practice appears very early; in Charles the Great's capitulary of 811 he writes: "What shall we say of those men who, under cloak of the love of God and His saints, or martyrs or confessors, translate the bodies and relics of holy folk from place to place, and there build new minsters and most urgently exhort all folk they can to give their goods thereunto?"³ Among scores of instances which might be

¹ This was the regular *traditio* or *investitura*: a twig or a sod from the land was publicly given in token of the transference of the estate itself. Mabillon, *AA.SS.OSB.* Saec. II, pp. 44 ff. For other instances of the miracles worked by relics in defence of monastic property, see *ibid.* pp. 734 (St Amand), 799 (St Gisleen), 804 (St Humbert); again Saec. IV, pars I, pp. 457, 458, 459; pars II, pp. 179, 370, 386.

² Van Espen, *Jus Canon.* (1724), I, 122.

³ *M.G.H. Leges* (1835), I, 167.

chosen, none is more illuminating than the story told us by Bernard Itier, the unusually efficient librarian and chronicler of the great abbey of St-Martial-de-Limoges, whose collections, with illustrative contemporary documents, have been published by the Société de l'Histoire de France (1874). Bernard was by no means uncritical; noting in 1197 the death of Bishop Guillaume Tempier he adds: "from whom I had received my deacon's orders at Bourges; and at whose tomb miracles are very frequently wrought. When I had enquired into the merits of his life, I learned that he had been merciful towards the poor, and a man of exceeding patience; yet he seemed to be most indolent, and therefore his cult was unexpected."¹ This gives the greater value to his notices of his own abbey-saint, St Martial, to whom he and his brother-monks ascribed the title of Apostle. There were some (he tells us) who were inclined to limit the number of Apostles strictly to twelve, and others who laid stress on the absence of Martial's name from the Gospels: "but those who smacked of a saner intelligence affirmed him to have been the one principal Apostle after the Twelve". He tells how Archbishop Gauzlin of Bourges [1020] held a provincial council which decided that Martial had as much right to be called Apostle as John the Evangelist had: "For his *gesta*, always accepted by the Church as canonical, do sufficiently manifest his apostolate, and that he was beyond all doubt one of the 72 Apostles whom the Lord sent as lambs among wolves." Ebionite heretics, it is true, deny the title of Apostle to all except the Twelve; but, after the decision of this council, "Martial was acclaimed as Apostle by all the Catholics, and the Ebionites were confounded" (pp. 7-8). In 1211, "the shrine wherein the Apostle's head is laid was renewed. . . . On the 30th October, on a Sunday, whereon the sun shone with unwonted light, Bernard the Librarian displayed the Apostle's head to the whole people of Limoges, with honour and rejoicing. On the morrow, we found 13½ marks of gold, and as many of silver, in the old shrine" (p. 80). This would be worth, altogether, nearly 1200 *livres* (Ducange, *s.v. Marca*). Next, in that same year, "a gold medal was fixed into the urn of St Martial. Thus the

¹ *St-Martial*, p. 65. His bones were solemnly translated, as those of a saint, in 1211 (p. 83).

wives of rich folk are growing again into the custom of placing their medals there after their death; thou shalt find there 425 *livres* and 6 golden rings".¹

Bernard's successors carry the story on; they relate the solemn periodical "ostensions" of the sacred head (pp. 137, 145, 149 [miraculous], 197 [ditto]). In 1319 the chronicler is greatly astonished: "Charles, brother to King Philippe [le Bel], of France, and Count of La Marche, spent a night at Limoges in St Martial's abbey, and did not visit the saint or enter the minster, which is an unheard-of thing!" (p. 147). But, in 1364, when the Black Prince retook Limoges after its revolt, and perpetrated the massacre so pitifully recorded by Froissart, "St Martial's head was shown in reverence to so great a lord, and 18 persons were slain by reason of the sore press of folk" (p. 200). At another shrine 52 pilgrims had similarly been crushed to death in 1018 (pp. xxxii, 285). And Bernard once records the wealth of a still greater relic than St Martial: "the body of St Benedict on the Loire [*i.e.* at Fleury] was translated into a new shrine, the cost whereof was 1100 *livres*". At St-Trond, in 1082, it is on record that the relics brought in 100 *livres* a week: an enormous sum, even when all allowance has been made for the chances of medieval exaggeration here.²

Still more interesting figures come from Canterbury, where the account-rolls for many years have been preserved. The offerings very naturally fluctuated, as hospital subscriptions do nowadays, with rising or falling prosperity in the kingdom.

In 1213, the year in which the Convent returned from France, whither it had been banished by King John's persecution, the total amount of oblations at all the Holy Places in the Church was 32*l.* 16*s.* 6*d.*, and in the next year, when the General Interdict was withdrawn, 38*l.* 18*s.* 2½*d.* Popular sympathy, and the excitement caused by public attention being strongly drawn to ecclesiastical concerns, probably caused the offerings in these years to swell beyond the average: for in 1219 they had diminished by more than one third, reaching only to 22*l.* 7*s.* 8*d.* The next year (1220) when the relics of the saint were *translated* to the new shrine in the grand chapel just

¹ P. 82. As it stands, the text reads "*iiij libras v. viginti ibi reperies et vj annulos aureos*". I am suggesting that a *c* has been left out, by the copyist or printer, between *iiij* and *libras*; otherwise it is difficult to see what the sense can be.

² Mabillon, *Annales*, v, 178.

built for its reception, the offerings by a bound multiplied five-fold, amounting to 1,142*l.* 5*s.* 0*d.* The year after they were of course less, but still over 500*l.*, and some sum rather smaller than this was probably for a long time the average income from pilgrims' offerings; but in Simon de Montfort's two years, the years of Lewes and Evesham, the accounts stand thus: . . . £95. 11. 3, next year £102. 5. 6. . . . In 1266-7 they recovered still further, yielding 110*l.* 6*s.*¹

Let us put this into its proper financial perspective. The translation, at one bound, almost doubled the whole revenues of the monastery; it raised them from £1500 to £2700. The average income for the six preceding years had been £1460; for the next six years it was £2340. "Only on one or two occasions, during the period of nearly two centuries covered by these accounts [the income] fell to so low an amount as before the inauguration of the shrine."² In the year 1265, the offerings to St Thomas came to £83. 12*s.* 6*d.* out of a total of £102. 5*s.* 6*d.* for the whole church. The offerings at the High Altar, where the Host was exposed, amounted to just £1.³ Later in the Middle Ages, Canterbury imitated Rome and obtained papal permission for Jubilees of St Thomas, with special indulgences for pilgrims. That of 1420 brought in more than £400. That of 1520 never materialized, because, while the convent could not afford to offer more than 50 per cent. of the *net* profits of this indulgence, Leo X held out for 50 per cent. of the *gross*.⁴

This was, perhaps, as rich a shrine as any in Europe outside Rome. We must multiply these figures, to find their rough equivalent in modern values, by about 40 in the early fourteenth century, and at least 25 or 30 even in 1500.⁵ At our next greatest shrine, Walsingham, even in 1534, the offerings at the chapel of Our Lady came to £260. 1*s.* and "at the sacred milk of Our Lady" £2. 2*s.* 3*d.* They must have been far more considerable in earlier times.⁶ St Augustine's, Canterbury, received £41. 10*s.* 8*d.* from "oblations at the bodies of the saints".⁷ A few more cases may be quoted here; details and references will be found in the

¹ *Hist. MSS. Com. Report IX*, p. 124 b.

² *Lit. Cant.* R.S. II, xlvi.

³ *Hist. MSS. Com.*, *loc. cit.*

⁴ *Lit. Cant.* III, xxxv.

⁵ See my Preface, and the monograph there cited.

⁶ *V.C.H. Norfolk*, II, 397.

⁷ *Excerpta*, 7.

Appendix. The shrine of St Edmund at Bury brought in £120 a year [1300]. Glastonbury had probably at least as much from its relics. At Ely, an average of £32 from 1291 to 1360. At Bodingen in Saxony, 100 florins. Offerings at smaller shrines are sometimes estimated in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. At Mont St-Michel, in Normandy, the proportion was enormous. In 1338, out of a total income of 6879 *livres*, the pilgrims' offerings accounted for no less than 1100.¹

With these double advantages, spiritual and temporal, the collection and worship of relics naturally became one of the busiest occupations of the Middle Ages. For instance, the Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa) was a most munificent patron of Cologne: he even purposed, if he had lived longer, to build a stone bridge over the mighty stream; "but posterity reckoned it as his greatest achievement that he had brought to 'Holy Cologne', rich in relics and greedy of relics, one which increased the glory of the city and attracted thousands of pilgrims—the bones of the Holy Three Kings".² St Louis is said to have offered the Count of Fondi 15,000 florins for the bones of St Thomas Aquinas, but in vain.³ It was natural, therefore, that each great abbey should have possessed a veritable thaumaturgic museum; each vied with its fellows in the rarity and curiosity of its specimens. The monks of Durham, for instance, had griffins' eggs and claws—*i.e.* ostrich-eggs and ibex-horns. They boasted not only the coals of St Lawrence, reminiscent of Boccaccio, but also one of his joints, still bearing traces of the sacrilegious fire. They had portions of Moses's rod, of John Baptist's raiment, and the charger which had held his head; the Virgin Mary's shirt, and rock marked with spots of her milk; of the tree under which the three angels sat with Abraham, and of the Tree of Paradise; of the flesh and fat of St Thomas Becket; a tooth of St Gengulphus, sovereign for the falling sickness; of the twelve thrones of the Apostles. Their long list of relics contains specimens from at least three of the classes which Guibert of Nogent, in his *De Pignoribus Sanctorum*, had long since condemned as spurious and blasphemous. The long list of

¹ Snape, p. 74.

² Aloys Schulte, in *Sitzungsb. Bayer. Akad. Hist.-Phil.* (1919), p. 16.

³ *AA.SS. Boll.* (1863), Mart. 1, 724 c.

St Albans' relics (Dugdale, II, 234) is almost as ludicrous: there is perhaps no surviving list of monastic relics which might not palliate, if not justify, the irreverence of Henry VIII's Visitors. But it is very significant to compare the inventories, when more than one has survived from the same house, and to note how many of these relics had disappeared in the later generations of the Middle Ages, when faith had lost much of its naïveté and sometimes the gold or silver settings had tempted financial reformers or thieves. Abundant evidence could be adduced for the slow decay of this or that relic, as memory faded or popular taste changed. The Franciscans of Draguignan had the tunic of St Louis of Toulouse: the guardian in 1744 "discovered it in a cupboard of the sacristy, where it had been irreverently flung".¹ Moreover, while the relic still remained, it might fall into great neglect. At Bicester, the same shrine which produced £1. 18s. in 1315 was worth only 18s. to the monks in 1378, and only 5s. in 1457. A Durham saint, unknown to the orthodox calendar, St John Warton, was producing £5. 14s. 9½d. in 1456, but went absolutely bankrupt before the Dissolution, and disappeared from the Shrine-Master's accounts.

A recent study by Mr W. Telfer illustrates both sides of relic-worship:² on the one hand the immense importance which these claims to sanctity might assume in social and economic life; on the other, the almost incredible carelessness frequently shown by the authorities in verifying such claims, and even the carelessness of the possessors when old traditions had decayed, and men neglected the relics almost as a child discards its worn-out toys. This comes out to some extent also in Miss Toynbee's *St Louis of Toulouse* (p. 227), and very emphatically in an exhaustive article by A. van Gennep. He shows how, in his native Savoy, St Francis of Assisi has become almost totally absorbed by St-François de Sales of four centuries later. He writes (p. 115):

The successive abandonment of those monastic cults which came at intervals into Savoy proves, I think, that they always had a comparatively artificial character, and never took real root among the

¹ M. R. Toynbee, *St Louis of Toulouse* (1929), p. 93. It is not altogether irrelevant to quote the case of St Francis of Assisi.

² *The Treasure of São Roque* (S.P.C.K. 1934).

people... The fate of the Franciscan saints in our popular devotion, therefore, is not due to their specially Franciscan quality, but rather to their having been regarded by the people as imported: they came into Savoy at a time when the popular creed was already fixed, and the attributes useful for rural life were already divided among different intercessors. St Antony of Padua, alone, has succeeded in keeping his place, because there was, before his time, no intercessor whose special function it was to recover lost property. Therefore, since men always and everywhere will mislay things, St Antony of Padua retains, in some parts of Savoy, a really popular cult, whereas St Francis of Assisi and St Clara have fallen into oblivion, except perhaps among the educated bourgeoisie and the small local nobility. ... Thus Santa Clara is no longer invoked anywhere in Savoy, but St Clair, who cures eye-troubles, is still worshipped in its ancient sanctuaries... St Charles Borromeo is now forsaken, even as St Roch whom he had extruded; for the bubonic plague [in which these two specialized] no longer exists.¹

A generation or two ago, popular devotion in Savoy inclined to such novelties as Notre-Dame de la Salette or de Lourdes; these now begin to pale before the newer stars of Joan of Arc, Philomena, and Ste-Thérèse-de-l'Enfant-Jésus (p. 118). The process which he describes here can be traced all through the Middle Ages in the worship of saints and their relics. A modern observer has noted how completely, for instance, all those centuries forgot that Puteoli was the spot whence St Paul proceeded to Rome after one of the most memorable episodes in all Christian history, whether we regard it from the romantic standpoint or for its influence on the growth of the infant Church.

¹ *Revue d'Hist. franciscaine* (1927), IV, 113 ff. On some other occasions, however, the Roman Court took great care to examine the credentials of the candidate for canonization, according to the standards of that day: Miss Toynbee's study is valuable for its emphasis on this. For the critical and even sceptical spirit shown in the case of St Edmund Rich, when political bias came in, see her study, p. 227, and the fuller translation in my Appendix.

CHAPTER VII

THE RELIC MARKET

IN these circumstances, it was almost inevitable that relics and miracles should very often come as definitely into the financial sphere as into the religious. Certainly this is noticeable even from very early times, and the movement advances steadily to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond. The reader may have noticed, in that Lynn account-roll, the suspiciously round sum recorded for the offerings in 1509; exactly half a mark. It is quite possible that by this time they were regularly farmed out, as we know them to have been at St-Loup.¹

Again, advertisement was found as valuable a factor in what we may call religious trade as in worldly commerce. Mabillon records a very interesting example in 853 at Prüm, where there was the shrine of St Marward.

A certain woman, desiring to bring worldly succour to God and the holy martyrs who served there, brought a waggon laden with bread and drink and other necessities, and hastened to the abbey. But, when she was now nigh unto the place, she went on before her waggon: and, seeing that the saint's tomb was not resplendent with gold and silver, as is the wont of foolish and irreligious minds, she despised and mocked at the place. Therefore she hastened back unto her own folk, and bade them retrace their steps, saying "here is nought of sanctity". Then, by vengeance of the saints, her waggon brake and the drink was spilled, and the whole freight was so scattered as to become useless. Moreover she herself, two days after, was punished with death in vengeance for her contempt.²

This was just as human as the desire to save one's soul by giving to the monks either in life or at death; but both were equally dangerous to true religion. The first Christian martyrs were true heroes; so also were many of the ascetics; and it was a healthy instinct which seized upon every reminder of great thoughts or great things done. But, in its development, relic-worship became thoroughly unhealthy, spreading at will over the wild soil of those disorderly centuries. It would be the work

¹ *Bib. Éc. Chartes*, II, 256.

² *AA.SS.O.S.B. Saec. IV*, pars i (ed. 1677, p. 613).

of a lifetime to collect and arrange all the indications of popular ignorance which come out in the *Acta Sanctorum*, the sermonaries, and other similar records. The story, when fully told, would give very much the same impression as Borrow's *Bible in Spain*; I shall have to touch just the fringe of it in a later chapter.¹ Christianity did to some extent gild relic-worship; but that worship tarnished Christianity.

Another thing that degraded relics and miracles was their employment in politics. For Church politics, this was natural enough. The most conspicuous example here is St Thomas of Canterbury; but the case of Archbishop Engelbert of Cologne shows even more clearly the practical value of these miracles in politics. This prelate was murdered by Frederick, Count of Ysenberg, in 1225; his successor besieged and destroyed Frederick's castle. "The aforesaid Engelbert, after his death, was rendered illustrious by many and stupendous miracles; but, when once the count, his murderer, not long afterwards, was broken on the wheel in course of justice outside the walls of Cologne, the miracles ceased even unto the present day" (*i.e.* until 1511).²

With such cases as this we may have great sympathy, as for the popular veneration which made relics of the bones of friars who were burned for adhering too literally to the Rule of St Francis, or of that Simon de Montfort who was felt to have defended the cause of righteousness against Henry III. But the religious element was far more dubious in the case of Simon's father and namesake, the victor in the Albigensian Crusade. After all, that man's main claims to sanctity lay in the multitude of heretics whom he slew in battle or massacred after a successful siege. He had, indeed, the vehement faith which might be expected from a knightly champion in the thirteenth century: but not without such crude contrasts as we meet almost everywhere in the Middle Ages. Here, for instance, is one of the last episodes in his brilliant career.

The archbishop, twice over, excommunicated Montfort and interdicted all the churches so long as he should remain at Narbonne. The soldiers of Christ [Montfort's army] stoned the archiepiscopal

¹ A certain amount of evidence may be found in my *Ten Medieval Studies* (*Religious Education before the Reformation*). Compare what Sir Thomas More confesses concerning Irishmen's prayers to the saints for success in sin (*Life in the M. Ages*, p. 246).

² *Chron. Hirsau.* i, 536.

palace; and the most Catholic Simon, heedless of the anathema, which he greeted with mockery, caused Mass to be celebrated in spite of the interdict.¹

When we remember that such a celebration was mortal sin, and that the officiating priest, if he had died suddenly unrepentant, must (in medieval theology) have gone inevitably to hell, we may realize the significance of this action on the part of the Crusader *par excellence* against heresy. Yet, when Simon's skull was crushed by a stone hurled from the walls of Toulouse, it was the partisan only who survived in popular imagination. They carried his body to Carcassonne for burial: "at his body miracles were wrought", writes the Limoges chronicler briefly: but the epic of the Albigensian Crusade reports the voice of the clergy through their bishop.

The pope, who loved him and had chosen him, will lay the count where St Paul lies buried [at Rome] and will make a saint of him; for he hath ever served the Holy See, and obeyed the Church, and he is written among the martyrs in heaven. For never did man on earth sin less than he; since Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross, who hath suffered a more cruel death than he? The Church of Christ, which had cherished him so dearly, had never a stronger arm or a more faithful friend.¹

Let Simon pass, however, as a champion of the Faith after his own fashion. But nothing of the kind can be pleaded for Edward II, one of the least decorous of our kings in private life, whose bones became literally a gold-mine to the monks of Gloucester, and enabled them to rebuild their church with a magnificence which created a new style in architecture. His body worked miracles because his death had been cruel, and his cult was profitable to a political party. So also with Earl Thomas of Lancaster, Edward's enemy: a thoroughly selfish and factious politician, but one whose execution was regretted and resented by a powerful party.² So, again, with the rebel Archbishop Scrope of York.³ Even a very ordinary victim's corpse might

¹ A. Luchaire, *Innocent III et les Albigeois*, p. 259; *Croisade contre les Albigeois*, ed. Mary-Lafon, p. 334; *St-Martial*, p. 102, where the editor's footnote quotes the claim of sanctity and martyrdom from his epitaph.

² Henry VIII's Commissioners listed the monastic wonder-working relics in their reports. A list of those for Yorkshire is given in the *Trans. East Riding Ant. Soc.* (1893), I, 75. It shows that Thomas of Lancaster was still worshipped down to the Dissolution.

³ See my *Life in the M. Ages*, I, 15 and IV, 298.

have its value, so long as he had some sort of party behind him. In 1295, an Alsatian knight was traitorously slain in a vendetta; in 1297 his bones were solemnly "translated" to the Dominicans' church at Colmar.¹ At the present moment, everyone in Germany must salute at the name of Horst Wessel; five centuries ago, multitudes would have been offering at his tomb. Nobody would have asked what his life had been; his death in a party cause would have been a sufficient passport.

An unavoidable excrescence from this mixture of enthusiasm and commercialism was its encouragement of falsehood and forgery. Upon this point a twelfth-century abbot, contemporary and friend of St Anselm, has spoken as frankly as any modern critic of the medieval Church. This man, Guibert de Nogent, wrote a whole treatise on the subject.² He begins with the bodies of saints of whom we know nothing but that "they are believed to be celebrated in certain worthless records"; and of others "who perchance, in their lifetime, deserved to be thrust forth from the church itself". Next, he comes to popular wilfulness: a boy happened to die on Good Friday; the holiness of the day was transferred to the corpse; a shrine was built round him; pilgrims came from immense distances, and the abbot, "being enticed by the multitude of gifts that were brought, suffered the fabrication of false miracles". Guibert sees very plainly that the mainspring of all this lies in the unbridled imagination of ignorant multitudes.

What though the common consent of the Church agree in the case of St Martin, St Rémy, and such great saints, yet what shall I say of such as are daily sainted and set up in rivalry to them, by the common folk of our towns and villages?—Let them tell me how they can expect a man to be their patron saint concerning whom they know not even that which is to be known? For thou shalt find no record of him but his mere name. Yet, while the clergy hold their peace, old wives and herds of base wenches chant the lying legends of such patron saints at their looms and their broidering-frames; and, if a man refute their words, they will attack him in defence of these fables not only with words but even with their distaffs.

¹ *Ann. Colmar*, pp. 158, 170.

² *De Pignoribus Sanctorum*, first published by the Benedictines of St Maur in the seventeenth century, and reprinted in Migne, *P.L.* CLVI, cols. 607 ff. I have translated six pages from it in *Life in the M. Ages*, I, 15.

For himself, he frankly confesses that he does not seek martyrdom by preaching to such multitudes the unpalatable truth. Once, the relic-mongers offered "some of that very bread which our Lord pressed with his own teeth; and, if ye believe not, here is this great man . . . who will . . . corroborate my words". Guibert blushed, but held his peace. "What shall I say? Not even monks (not to speak of the secular clergy) refrain from such filthy gains; nay they preach doctrines of heresy in matters of our faith, even in mine own hearing. For, as Boethius saith, 'I should be rightly condemned for a madman if I should dispute with madmen.'"

In a large number of cases, no doubt these unknown saints and unvouched relics had a perfectly natural history of their own, if only there had been scholars interested in tracing it. Guibert cites a case where the saint was a man who "fell into a well while drunken with wine, and thus he died". It is extremely probable, to say the least, that the Amphibalus worshipped at St Albans side by side with the proto-martyr was simply Alban's cloak (*ἀμφίμαλλος*), which was naturally his inseparable attendant, and which, in the monks' complete ignorance of Greek, was taken to have been his faithful comrade. So, again, at St Bees, the relic was a holy bracelet, in Anglo-Saxon *beage*, and it is quite possible that this was the only reality, from which legend constructed an imaginary holy virgin, Bega,¹ as St Catharine of Alexandria is probably merely a personification of virgin purity.

Even without Guibert's passionate protests, we should see how tempting it would be to exploit these popular superstitions to economic advantage, and how this temptation led sometimes to downright fraud. At Caunes, in the tenth century, two such cases are recorded.² In [1170] a very remarkable complaint was made by the Bishop of Lisieux, in a letter to Pope Alexander III.³ The monastery was in a wretched state of discipline. The abbot was absentee and contumacious; one monk had murdered a conventual cook who had protested against attentions to his wife; the prior himself, in a drunken fit, had attacked two monks

¹ *Reg. St Bees*, Surtees Soc. (1915), pp. xxxiii ff.

² *Caunes*, pp. 39, 41.

³ *Grestain*, p. 48; *P.L.* cci, 79; compare *Bulletin de l'École des Chartes*, xiii, 356 ff.

with his knife in the refectory, and they had killed him with a pole which stood ready to hand; knife-fights had taken place in the cloister, "as attested by recent wounds, and scars not yet fully healed". This kind of thing ended, naturally enough, in pecuniary embarrassment; and the bishop describes how,

in order that they might be believed to work miracles, and might entice secular folk to frequent their abbey by means of certain contrivances, they promised restoration to health for whosoever would submit to a sevenfold immersion in water which they had enchanted by I know not what spells. Thus a sick woman, plunged again and again into this icy water, gave up the ghost in the hands of the monks who held her down, since her sickness rendered her incapable of resisting the bitter chill.

Moreover, Sir Thomas More, even in his defence of orthodoxy against the new heretics, confesses to two very startling and unseemly instances; one from the abbey of St-Valéry-sur-Somme, during his own lifetime, and the other from Leominster in the reign of Henry V.¹ Those two stories, of themselves, must provoke very serious reflections on the pound-foolishness of monks who fell back upon these penny-wise methods of raising money not only from the common folk, but from others who ought to have known better.

The absurdities, and even blasphemies, into which men were thus led, are sufficiently notorious. Perhaps the most blasphemous relic of all is that with which I deal in my first volume (pp. 517 ff.). Yet it not only held its own throughout the Middle Ages, but is still preserved in seven different churches.² Again, the enormous multiplication of relics is sufficiently well known. Five or six churches have claimed the head of St John Baptist. Guibert noted the existence of two in his own time, and ridiculed "the absurdity of supposing that so great a man had been two-headed". So, again, the friar Salimbene (1248) found himself confronted with the story of three corpses of St Mary Magdalene, the latest of which had just been found "whole, save for one leg". "It is manifest", he writes, "that the body of the same woman cannot be in three places"; and he quotes a parallel from Ravenna, where two great churches each claimed to possess

¹ *English Works* (1557), pp. 154 (really 134) and 194.

² See Appendix.

the body of St Apollinare.¹ Two and a half centuries after Guibert, Sir John Maundeville was confronted with yet a third claimant; but he met the problem with philosophic resignation. Parts of the head were at Constantinople, at Rome and at Genoa: "And some men say that the head of Saint John is at Amiens in Picardy; and other men say that it is the head of Saint John the Bishop. I wot never, but God knoweth; but in what wise that men worship it, the blessed Saint John holds him a-paid."² A century later, we seem to find another at Trimmingham in Norfolk. Alice Cook of Horsted, in her last testament of 1478, provides: "I will have a man to go a pilgrimage to St John hys hede at Trymmyngham."³ Hauck points out that in Germany alone, even before the finding of the True Cross on the first Crusade, fragments of it can be counted by the dozen; while "we can scarcely go wrong if we reckon the numbers of relics in German churches in 1100 at many hundreds of thousands. There were some churches which had 500 or more."⁴

Nothing serious was done by the hierarchy to remedy all this confusion: the few protests were drowned in popular clamour, or simply ignored in popular practice. Charles the Great, in his capitulary of 794 (Synod of Frankfort), had decreed "that no new saints be worshipped or called upon, nor let memorials be set up to them by the way; but let those alone be venerated in the Church who have been rightly chosen on the authority of their *passiones* or lives".⁵ Again, in [850], Amulo, Archbishop of Lyons, consulted by one of his suffragans, wrote very plainly against two monks who had encouraged the worship of certain relics at St-Bénigne-de-Dijon which had no pedigree whatever, for "they confessed, with astounding impudence, that they had forgotten the very name of the saint". This, however, did not prevent their working miracles, so that crowds of 300 or 400, mostly women, might be found at this new shrine. It is the

¹ *M.G.H. Scriptt.* xxxii, 520; *From St F. to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 311. The passage is so significant of the attitude of a believing but shrewd churchman in the thirteenth century, that I reprint most of it here in the Appendix.

² *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (Macmillan, 1900), p. 72.

³ Blomefield's *Norfolk*, 1st ed. iv, 356. This, however, might perhaps claim to be St John of Bridlington, or some other John.

⁴ *KG. Deutschlands* (1913), iv, 79, 83.

⁵ *M.G.H. Leges. Capitularia* (Boretius), i, 77, § 42. The *passiones* here referred to are the written records of a saint's martyrdom.

devil (writes the archbishop) who produces these illusions, "while in sacred places and great churches of holy martyrs there are men who, for the sake of filthy lucre, not only do not forbid it but even instigate it... only in order that from men's vows and gifts they may either fill their purses or spend their time in feasting and drinking".¹ But isolated protests of that kind were unavailing. Perhaps the greatest age of relic-invention was, as the chronicler Glaber tells us, soon after the year 1000, in intimate connexion with the "white robe of churches" which he describes. Almost equally active was the age of great monastic revival, in the early twelfth century. Very seldom did popes attempt to settle the claims of rival corpses, nor were their decisions final even then. Martin IV, in 1281, published a bull declaring for the Vézelay Magdalene; yet, only two years later, we find the pope's special friend Charles of Anjou ostentatiously patronizing the rival corpse of Ste-Baume; and Salimbene writes at that time as if the rival claims of Vézelay and Sinigaglia were dead for ever!² The great Louvain canonist Van Espen (1702) has a paragraph which deals very plainly with the difficulty of struggling with relic-worship and other popular superstitions. The people, he says, at once lose their heads and cry *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, and the priests abet them, not out of true zeal for religion but because, like Demetrius the silversmith, "their gain is by his trade".³

It was, indeed, the habit of subdivision which enabled even the smallest priory, in most cases, to have its relics and its separate offerings, quite apart from those enshrined within the altar. Here again, we may hear Guibert:

Time and strength fail me to count them all, for not so many frauds are wrought with whole bodies as with their limbs and fragmentary portions, since men distribute vulgar bones for sale as relics of the saints. This is plainly done by those who (in St Paul's words) *suppose gain to be godliness*.⁴

Yet, originally, this division had been as contrary to Church authority as it was to common decency. The earliest notice occurs

¹ *P.L.* cxvi, cols. 77 ff. (*Epistola* 1). See further in Appendix; cf. Van Espen, *Jus Eccl.* (1724), I, 800.

² See *From St F. to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 313.

³ *Jus Eccl.* (1724), I, 990. For full translation see Appendix.

⁴ *P.L.* clvi, col. 626.

in an imperial decree of 386, prohibiting the removal or sale of martyrs' bones: *nemo martyrem distrahat, nemo mercetur*.¹ St Augustine complained of the "multi hypocritae sub habitu monachorum", who, in his time, wandered everywhere, "some of whom trade in members of martyrs, if martyrs indeed they be". This, as Baronius observes, is sufficient to account for the Emperor Justinian's decree of a century later: "Let no man transfer a body, once buried, to another place; let no man dismember a martyr or trade in him." Let men keep such bodies (he adds) and build chapels over them if they wish.² The next stage comes with St Gregory the Great [600]. The Empress Constantina had begged for the head of St Paul, a request so bold that Mabillon staggers to record it. St Gregory expressed his extreme regret, but gave a firm refusal: Ye know not what ye ask! He himself, wishing to make some repair in the tomb, had ordered the provost to dig hard by: bones had been found, apparently not belonging to the saint, yet so sacred that the provost had fallen into sudden death. Again, the repair of St Lawrence's tomb had occasioned a quite accidental opening of the coffin; and, although the monks and lay-brethren dared not touch them, the very sight was so deadly that all died within ten days.

Therefore let our most gracious Lady know that the Romans, when they give relics of saints, have no such presumptuous custom as to touch any part of the body; but they only put a napkin into a casket and lay it against the most sacred bodies of the saints... and as many miracles are wrought thus, as though their bodies were specially brought thither.

Certain Greeks, in St Leo's days, presumed to doubt this; so the pope

called for scissors and cut the napkin, from which blood flowed at once; for in Rome and in the whole west it is held altogether intolerable and sacrilegious that any man should touch the bodies of

¹ Le Blant, *Le vol des reliques*, in *Rendiconti Accad. Lincei*, Cl. scienze morali, etc. Seduta del 21 Nov. 1886 (vol. II, pp. 278 ff.). He refers also to Greg. Tours, *De Gloria Martyrum*, lib. I, c. 90; *Hist. Franc.* lib. VII, c. 31; Gregorius Magnus, *Epist.* IV, 30; Augustine, *De Op. mon.* c. 28 (P.L. XL, 575); *AA.SS. Boll.* Jan., II, 284.

² Baronius, *An.* 386, § li. Augustine, *De Op. mon.* c. 28 (P.L. XL, col. 575).

saints, even by chance.... Wherefore we marvel vehemently at the custom of the Greeks, who say that they lift the bones of saints [from their tombs]; indeed, we scarce believe it.

What we do know is, that Greeks sometimes come to Rome and dig up bones at random and carry them home as bones of saints. The pope rehearses other perils that flow from genuine relics, and concludes in another cloud of apologies to the empress.¹ It is piquant to note that, less than three centuries later, the great abbey of Farfa boasted "relics of the very body of St Gregory the Pope" together with others from "the very body of St Peter, and of the flesh of St James the Apostle, with parts of the bones or body of seven other saints".² The monk Adrevaldus, writing about A.D. 970, describes with much gusto the separation of St Benedict's bones from those of his sister Scholastica, and the miracle which enabled the two participant abbeys to secure each its own proper share of the skeletons.³ The flesh of St Thomas Aquinas was boiled from his bones, as we have seen. For popular pressure, so strong in medieval religion that we may trace it as the real source of many most important papal decrees, was here irresistibly set against both pope and emperor. Le Blant has traced the earlier phases of this movement.

I pause here with these citations of facts which might be collected in greater numbers. From those which I have quoted, several of which show us the irritation of the saints themselves at these sacrilegious depredations, it may be deduced that enlightened minds regarded the theft of relics as a condemnable action. Many, in their simplicity, did not thus conceive it; and the frequency of such thefts in the past, and almost in our own day, would suffice to prove this. A singular conception made men see in holy relics a charm like the talisman of an Arabian tale, which, with constant changes of ownership, always protects the person who has it in his possession. Moreover, many people were indulgent to the authors of such misdeeds. In that long story of Eginhard's, there is not a single word of blame for those who violated a church and a catacomb to get possession of two holy corpses; the only man stigmatized there is that second-hand thief, that most iniquitous rascal—*nequissimus nebulo*—who stole part of the first thief's booty. The writer speaks with some kindness of the monk who bribed the guardians in order

¹ *Register*, Ep. iv, 30; Migne, *P.L.* LXXVII, col. 701.

² Herrgott, p. 119.

³ Certain, p. 11.

to steal the body of St Gregory the Great: he was "inspired by a pious devotion to get possession of the saint's remains". As to that abbot Martin who [in 1204] threatened a priest at Constantinople with death in order to seize some splendid relics, the chronicler Gunther, who tells the story, confesses him for a robber, but a holy robber; *praedo sanctus*.

Even before this, we have a still more significant example from the life of one of the holiest—and, what is perhaps more to this purpose—the keenest psychologists and most determined business men—among medieval saints; namely Bishop Hugh of Lincoln. This man was one of those knights of the Holy Ghost who can dare, and carry off successfully, what no ordinary man would dream of; the man who faced and tamed Henry II, and treated Richard like a naughty child in the presence of two archbishops and four bishops, and within the walls of the royal chapel. Yet, even so, we may wonder at what his chaplain tells us concerning the relics at Fécamp in 1199. Hugh's business journey led him to this abbey: and

at this famous monastery he bit off two fragments from the bone of Mary Magdalene, that most blessed lover of Christ. Now, no man among those present, neither the abbot nor any monk, had ever beheld this bared of its covering; for it was most closely sewn into two folds of silken cloth and one of linen. The bishop besought a sight of this, and no man dared to allow it; whereupon he took a penknife from one of his notaries and swiftly cut the threads: then, unravelling that envelope, he reverently applied the most sacred bone to his mouth and his eyes. Then, being unable to wrench anything off with his fingers, he applied first his incisor teeth and then his molars, by the might whereof he quickly broke off two fragments, and placed them in my hand who write these words, saying: "Keep this for me with all care." But the abbots [abbot?] and his monks, who for some time had marvelled and shuddered, now brake forth into wrath at this sight, crying, "O! O! alas for the wicked deed! we believed that the bishop had implored these venerable relics for the sake of worshipping them, and, lo! he has put them between his teeth to gnaw like a dog!" Yet, while they proceeded thus, he soothed them with soft words, uttering among other things this memorable word: "If We touched, a little while ago, the Most Holy Body of the Holy of Holies with Our fingers, however unworthy, and, having touched [that Host] with our teeth or lips, have passed Him on into Our inward parts, wherefore should We not also confidently touch the members of His saints, for Our own protection, and for the sake

of bringing their worship and memory closer to Ourselves? and why not, when the opportunity is offered unto Us, gain possession thereof for due and honourable conservation?" At another time also, at Peterborough, where the arm of the glorious king and martyr Oswald is shown to this day with its bones and skin and bloody flesh, as though it had been freshly cut from a living body, [St Hugh], finding a prominent tendon that was pliable and soft to the touch, cut it away with his knife, and kept it for all possible reverence of conservation. This, therefore, with other holy relics which it would be tedious to rehearse, he put together in the ring which I have oftentimes mentioned.¹

These deeds and that word are all the more significant as coming from a saint who, when a priest came to him all agog with a miracle of the sacred Host, refused to turn aside for the sight, saying

Well! let [these folk], in the name of God, have for themselves signs of their own infidelity! What are these things to us? Do we marvel at particular images of this divine gift, we who daily behold, with most faithful eyes of the mind, the whole of this Heavenly Sacrifice? Let that man behold those little portions with his bodily eyes, who beholdeth not The Whole with the inward sight of faith.

The biographer, Hugh's chaplain, is naturally impressed here by his hero's physical courage; for there was a natural sense of risk about these mutilations. Abbot Aylward of Glastonbury (1052) "irreverently dug open the grave of [King] Edgar; his body was found incorrupt and too bulky to be forced into the new niche, and fresh blood was seen to drip from the digging; and thus it was placed on the altar with the other relics. That desecrator-abbot became mad and, as he left the church, his neck brake and he breathed his last."² When monks of Pontigny cut an arm from St Edmund Rich's body to put it where even women might come and worship (1250), the chronicler, John of Oxenedes, condemned this as "a rash act of boldness".³ But the temptation was too great; and, before the end of the Middle Ages, nearly all the most valuable corpses had been multitudinously parcelled out, or at least were asserted to have been subdivided. The fifteenth-century author of the romance of Girart de Roussillon expatiates very naturally upon that abbey

¹ *Magna Vita S. Hugonis*, R.S. p. 317.

² Dugdale-Caley, I, 3 n. i.

³ *Chronica*, R.S. p. 164.

which Girart founded at Vézelay, and upon that corpse of St Mary Magdalene which, far beyond the lands which Girart had given, were the source of that great house's renown and wealth, reciting how this precious relic was stolen from Aix in Provence by a monk of Vézelay named Badilo, "who was very devout and holy". He and his companions travelled secretly to the forgotten and deserted tomb, opened it, "and there they found the body of the blessed Magdalene lying whole and entire: so they drew it out with their hands". But, by the time they had brought her as far as Nîmes, they realized the dangers that beset them between there and Vézelay.

Then said the good Badilo to his fellows: "By my faith, friends, we cannot thus bear this holy body; for men may plainly see that it is a corpse; thus they might well arrest us and contrary us; for they will wish to know what it is, and our business might be delayed. Therefore it seems good to me, if you approve, that we should break the greater limbs of this holy body (to wit, the legs) whereby I believe we shall offend neither God nor her, and no man will ever grudge at us for this, seeing that we do it for a better end."... So, when night was come, they unwrapped the body of the Blessed Magdalene and severed her legs and removed them from the end of her body, and laid them in smaller and shorter space. When therefore they had done this, and sewed up firmly the leathern sack into which they had thrust it, then they recommended themselves to the protection of God and the Blessed Magdalene, and departed from the city.

The author is obliged to note that

the Provençaux say and affirm that the body hath never been removed from their land, and that they still have it among them. They may well say this; but I hold fast to the true history of France, wherein it appeareth that in the days of St Louis, the good King, the body of the Blessed Magdalene was placed and raised aloft in a shrine by one of the cardinals of Rome, in the presence of the said King Louis and more than 20,000 men, without counting women and children, who were there present. For which reason there is no cause to believe but that she is at Vézelay, not only for this aforesaid reason but also for the miracles which our Lord hath wrought and doth daily work there from day to day.¹

Another abuse was that of hawking the relics abroad on a begging-tour, whenever charity was growing colder at home, or,

¹ *Congrès archéologique de France*, XLIII^e session (1877), p. 903.

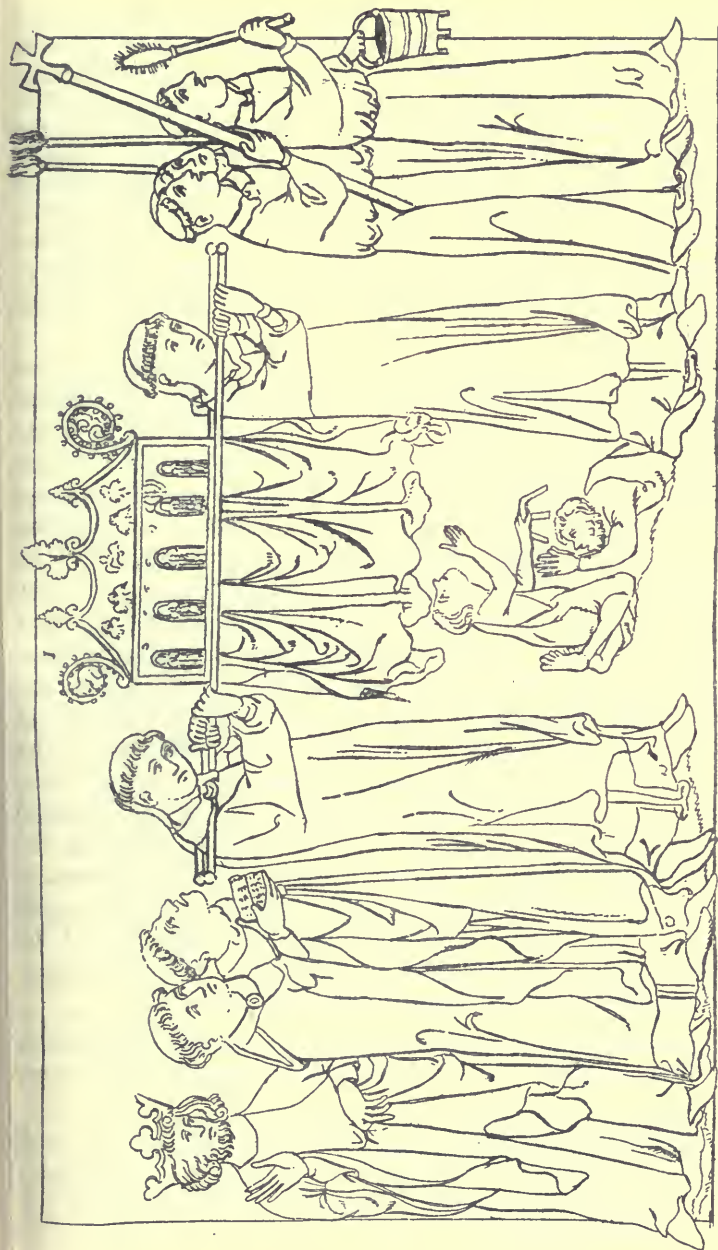
more pardonably, to remedy a fire or some other great calamity fallen upon the abbey. The elaborate ceremonial to be observed whenever relics were carried abroad, the solemnity of valediction and of welcoming their return, are fully described in the *Ancient Customal of Cluny* (P.L. CXLIX, col. 753, end of eleventh century). Thomassinus speaks of this as common from the eleventh to the thirteenth century.¹ But Alexander III, in the 3rd Lateran Council (1179), forbade monasteries to carry their relics about for contributions (c. 9). Innocent III, in the 62nd decree of his Lateran Council (1215), legislated against the practice of exposing relics outside their shrine, or offering them for sale, as one which led to "frequent detraction of the Christian religion". In the Cistercian *Institutions* (of 1240) we read:

we forbid all preachings by persons of our Order whereby alms may be collected to build churches, or for any similar cause; let monks or lay brethren who presume to do this be banished to other abbeys, never to return but by licence of the father abbot. Yet we are not forbidden to receive alms; but it is utterly unlawful to collect them in the churches or in the streets.²

But we may see, from the chronicle of St-Trond, how strong was the temptation. Abbot Rodulf, writing about 1120, emphasizes the miracles wrought there in the great days of Abbot Adelard (1055-72), and the immense wealth that these brought in. The abbey had been richly endowed in lands by earlier benefactors; but in increase of that great wealth, the tomb of St Trond was illustrious from day to day with the most frequent miracles, the fame whereof had been so spread abroad over the whole world, that not only our monastic precincts but even the whole area of our town sufficed not to contain the multitude of pilgrims. For, to a distance of almost half a mile, not only through all the surrounding public roads that led unto us, but also over the fields and meadows, there swarmed so great a concourse of pilgrims, of nobles and freemen and common folk of both sexes almost daily, and especially on solemn festivals, that they lodged in tents and tabernacles of leaves or of curtains, so that the whole town seemed like a beleaguered city; for the citizens' houses, already crowded with other pilgrims, could not contain these, together with the crowd of traders who, with all their horses and carts and wagons and beasts, could scarce bring enough to feed so great a multitude of pilgrims. What shall I say of the gifts which

¹ *Vetus et nova Eccl. Disciplina*, pars 111, lib. i, c. 74, § 6.

² *Nomasticon Cisterciense*, p. 346.



The Shrine of St Alban carried abroad.

they brought to the altar? To say nothing of the beasts, palfreys and oxen and cows, boars and rams and sheep, which were offered in incredible multitudes, there were also flax and wax, bread and cheeses, more than could be weighed or numbered or appraised, with silver threads. And when, [as Virgil saith] "Vesper had scarce descended upon the day", the heap of coins wearied very many guardians with receiving and reckoning; so that they could do naught else for the whole day long.... For, if I may tell the truth even to those who will not believe, the whole profit of that altar, reckoned in full, was far greater than all the other revenues of the abbey either then or now; and this, not only for a year or two, but during all the days of abbot Adelard.¹

No doubt there is a good deal of poetical exaggeration in this picture of a golden past; but there is no reason to reject altogether the painful contrast drawn by Rodulf's continuator, who wrote about 1136. "The profit of the altar at St Trond's tomb, which of old was inestimable, and wherefrom the monastery in those days was wont to repair all its deficiencies, doth in our own day scarce suffice to supply the due lights for our church."² The west front of St Albans abbey church in the first years of the thirteenth century was partly paid for by sending round a begging-party with relics, under escort of a cleric who had been raised from the dead through the merits of Sts Alban and Amphibalus; this party "heaped together no small sum of money".³ In the fifteenth century, the abbey of Ste-Colombe by Sens, armed with formal episcopal permission to carry their relics abroad "even unto the farthest limits of our diocese", raised enough money to repair much of the ravage done by the Hundred Years' War. They were so impressed by these financial advantages that, when they granted a single rib to the parish church of Ste-Colombe, hitherto destitute of all relics of the saint to which it was dedicated, this was under strict conditions. They compelled the recipient churchwardens to

promise and swear, between the hands of the notaries-public whose signatures are appended to this document, that they would never

¹ *Gest. Abb. Trud.* bk. 1, c. 10 (*M.G.H. Scriptt.* x, 234).

² *Ibid.* p. 316. For the miracle through which the relics of St-Ouen, borne solemnly by the monks with psalmody and bell-ringing, burst through a palace door closed against them and persuaded William the Conqueror to restore certain tithes of which he had deprived them, see Pommeraye, p. 420.

³ *Gest. Abb.* R.S. 1, 219.

carry or cause to be carried forth from the said parish church, into the diocese or into other churches, at however long an interval from this present date [1486], in any reliquary formed as a shrine, the sacred rib which we grant unto them. Otherwise, if they break this compact, they have agreed and consented by this present deed that we may thenceforward be empowered of our own bare authority, notwithstanding any prescription or possession, to bring back to ourselves and to our church or abbey the said rib and the said reliquary.¹

The causes at the back of these "relic-tours", as we may call them, are obvious; but the reasons for ecclesiastical prohibitions or restrictions need a little more explanation. There was, of course, the risk run by the holy relics themselves; we shall see this in the next chapter, at St-Loup. There was also the temptation to exaggeration or even plain falsehood, since this itinerant shrine had to compete, directly or indirectly, with similar shrines on begging-quest, or with its own past tour of a few years before: in fact, it is from such a tour that Guibert quotes the most inexcusable of the lies which he exposes. And, most important of all to all who were concerned with true monastic discipline, there was the infraction of that Chapter 66 of the Benedictine Rule, forbidding all movements outside the monastic precincts, except under necessity, "seeing that this is altogether inexpedient for their souls". It was on that score that Canon Law forbade the ministrations of monks in parish churches: a law fairly often relaxed on the Continent, but more rarely in England with its slightly stricter sense of monastic discipline. We may illustrate this by the words of a Bishop of Utrecht in 1157: "Since lovers of Religion ought to spend their time in divine service, even as their own Rule testifieth that it is indecent and perilous for them to mingle with crowds of men and frequentations of women."² But women, unfortunately, were the class most to be counted on for liberal offerings; and it is two other Cistercian houses which supply an illustration of the attempts to turn this obstacle.

The monks of Pontigny (according to their fellow-Cistercian Abbot of Meaux) found great profit from the fact that St

¹ Brullée, pp. 129, 137.

² *Cart. St-Trond*, I, 90. Cf. Gratian, *Decretum*, pars II, caus. xvi, q. 1, c. 5, 8; and *Decret. Greg.* lib. III, tit. xxxv, c. 2, tit. xxxvii, c. 1.

Edmund Rich, Archbishop of Canterbury, had died as an exile in their monastery. This became a popular pilgrimage: and,

since women also flocked thither, and it was not permitted [by the Cistercian statutes] to admit these to the Saint within the precincts of the abbey, therefore the monks, favouring the women's devotion, and still anxious to keep the ancient observances of their Order, and perchance gaping after their own money-gain, are said to have taken the Saint's arm from his shrine, in order that the women might not be entirely defrauded of their devotional purpose, and that they might earn no small gain from the women's offerings. But it is believed that God and his Saint were moved to indignation by this division of the arm from his other limbs; therefore they disdained thenceforward to work public miracles in face of the people.

Innocent IV, in 1250, added his own papal prohibition to strengthen this exclusion of women from Cistercian precincts; yet at Meaux itself the Order was so far relaxed by [1340] that the abbot, of his own authority, could admit womenfolk to the abbey's miracle-working crucifix. This, it was hoped, would "increase popular devotion, and would redound to the exceeding profit of our monastery". But they were disappointed; for "under cloak of this licence, women often visit the aforesaid crucifix to our damage, especially since their devotion grows cold, while they come thither only for the sake of looking into our church, and they increase our expenses in offering them hospitality".¹

The justice of these misgivings on the part of the authorities, and the extent to which relic-tours hallowed by tradition might become vested abuses, may be shown by clear evidence from age to age. As early as [410], we find St Augustine reckoning the feasts at martyrs' tombs among the "carnal defilements which the African Church suffereth in many places, and groans for in a few"; he complained, again, of those who "returned home drunken from the martyrs".² And, from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we have a remarkable Flemish instance which might very aptly stand as a commentary upon that picture by Breughel in the frontispiece of my *Medieval Village*. It had become a yearly custom, at St-Bavon-de-Gand, to carry St

¹ *Chron. Melsa*, R.S. I, 441; II, 66; III, 35.

² Lucius, p. 319.

Liévin's relics in solemn procession from the abbey to the village of Houthem, the scene of his martyrdom, and back.

The advantage of carrying these relics was held in much honour; it could be obtained only at the price of great sacrifices; in 1227 it had been granted to Siger Ribel and his heirs. These pilgrimages were always signalized by the most revolting disorders, which became more intolerable from year to year. They had tried to curb these by confiding the direction of the procession to two aldermen of Ghent; but the presence of these magistrates was powerless to restrain the scandalous excesses of the populace, who jostled each other in the train of the saint's shrine. Often the intervention of the bailiff of Host with his men-at-arms was needed to protect the inhabitants, and to maintain a semblance of order in processions which were prompted less by devotion than by licence, and which always gave occasion for the most deplorable scenes.

This was in 1316. In 1442, the suffragan bishop had to give out from the pulpit that disorders committed in these processions involved excommunication.

But all was of no avail; often the city of Ghent suffered from the popular excesses resulting from the procession. Thus, in 1466, the "confrères" on their return from Houthem, excited by several days of debauch, and encouraged by the populace, flocked to the Friday market-place with the shrine of St-Liévin and, in presence of these relics which they seemed to revere so deeply, destroyed the city tax-office. In spite of this criminal conduct, we cannot find that ecclesiastical interdict was launched against the instigators of these culpable disorders. In 1469, it was forbidden to carry the shrine on men's shoulders, and to utter vociferations which struck terror among the country-folk.

In 1505, the ceremony seems to have been reduced to some semblance of order; but in 1540 Charles V suppressed it altogether. Next year, a full account was written by an anonymous cleric, strongly anti-Lutheran, which abundantly justified this action.¹ Here are the more significant portions of his long memoir.

The excursion took place yearly at the end of June, and the relics remained a whole day and night before their return to Ghent.

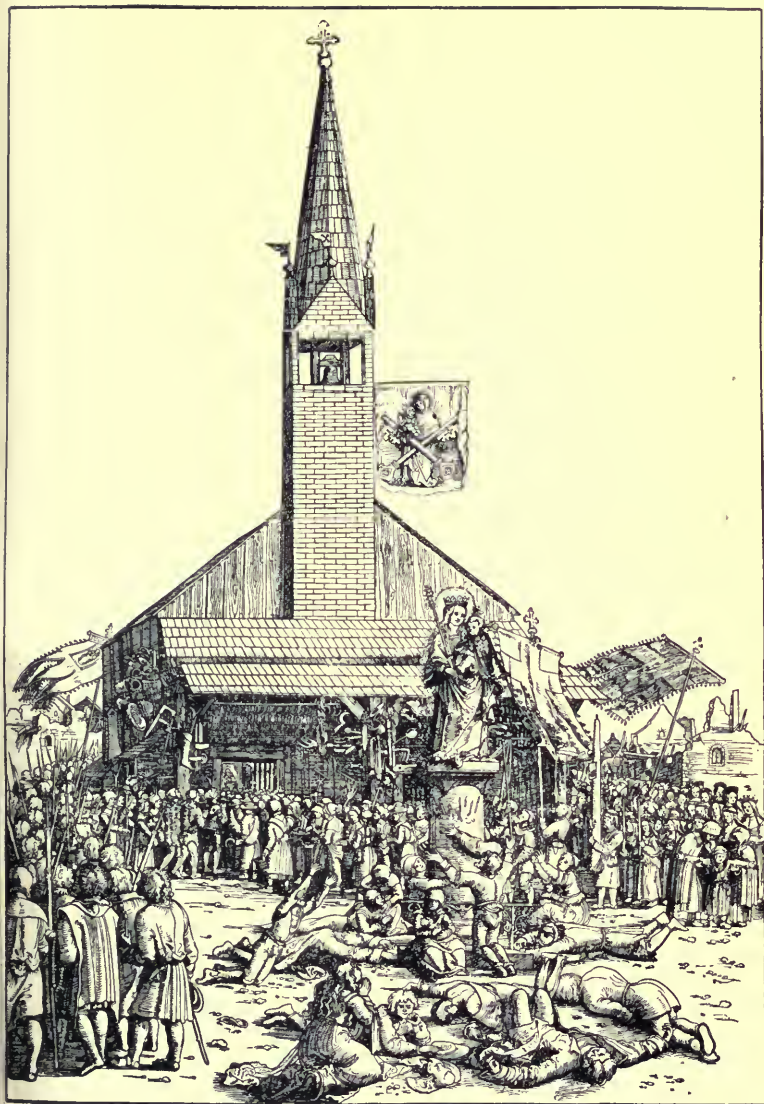
¹ Van Lokeren, pt. 1, pp. 116, 221. The full text was published by Gachard in his *Relation des Troubles de Gand* (Brussels, 1846, p. 103; cf. xvii and 86). I have not marked my omissions, which are mainly of verbiage.

The way and fashion of bearing the shrine was very strange, and almost a mahometry and idolatry.¹ Between eleven o'clock and midnight, a great number of common folk and others of the city of Ghent assembled before the abbey church; and, as soon as twelve began to strike, they opened the church door, and the whole assemblage of people entered all at once like men demented, and crying and making such a din that it seemed as though the church must fall and dissolve in pieces: it was fearful to hear. Then, just as the hour struck, a priest went and celebrated a low Mass, which was quickly said and heard, with very little devotion; for, instead, there was naught but derision and confusion. No sooner was this Mass ended, than the shrine was lifted up, wherein St Liévin's bones were laid. This was of silver, parcel-gilt, very great and heavy, seeing that it was enclosed in an iron grating, and thus laid upon two long wooden poles, which were very solid, for the carrying of the said shrine; yet the people caught it up suddenly as though it had no weight. Thus they bore it forth from the church, and thence from the city, running and crying and howling, unto the said village of Houthem, across fields and hedges, woods and ditches full or dry, by good ways and bad, like men bereft of their wits, making such a din as though all the devils had been there. They were attired for the occasion, all torn and ragged, with wreaths on their heads of vine branches and other green stuff; and the more part of them bore torches or lanterns.

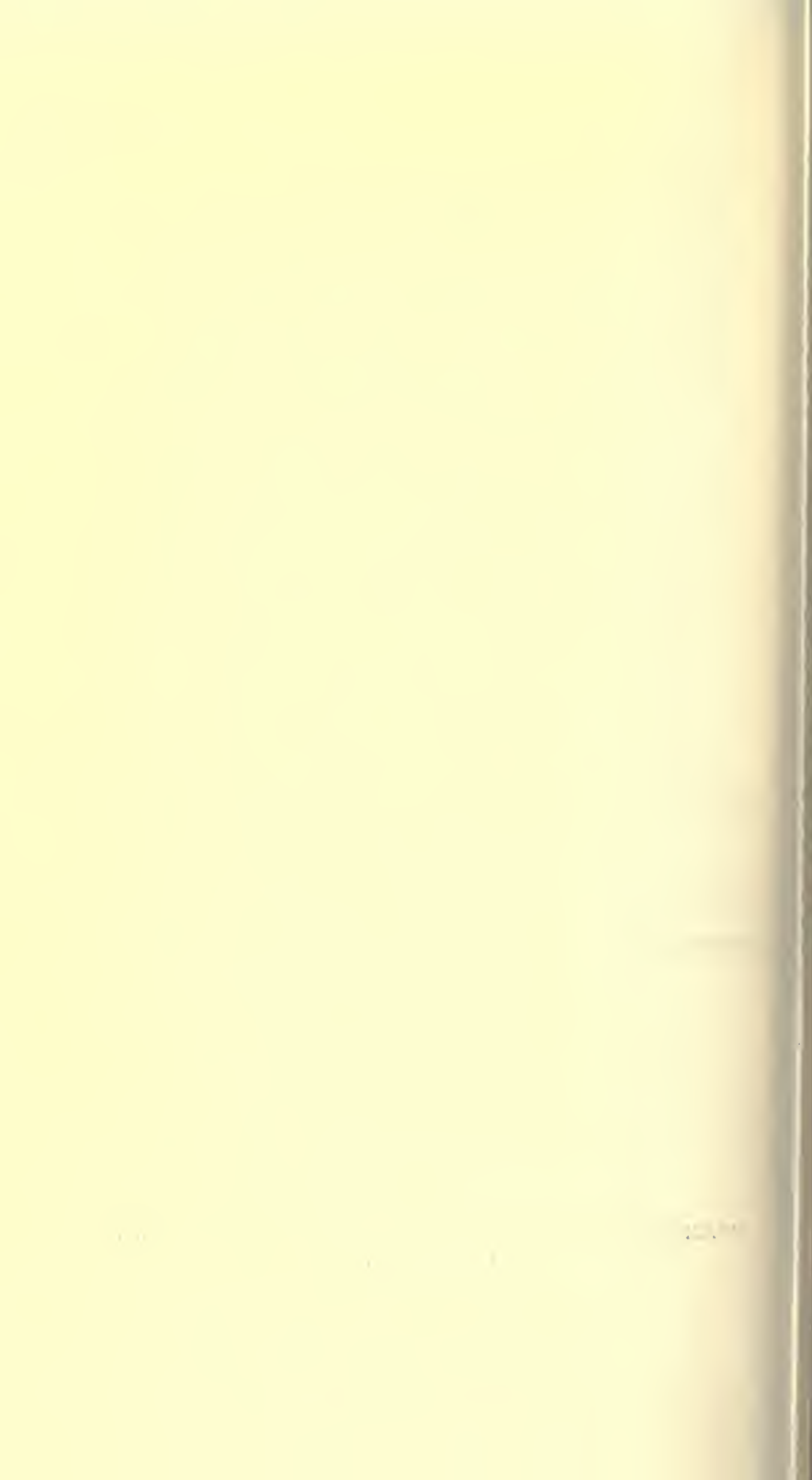
Next day people came in from Ghent:

the third part of the city was at Houthem that day: there was a free feast in the village. There were men of all sorts by bands, squadrons and gilds; some with drums and German flutes, others with trumpets, and many bagpipes and divers other instruments, playing at every side and in every corner of the village; some dancing and others making other games and pastimes; for the greater part went thither not for devotion but for their pleasures. And, both going and returning, there were certain halting-points and preachings at which the shrine and all the company stayed; but the sermons were very lightly spoken and heard with slight devotion. They came back to Ghent between three and four in the afternoon, each bringing home many sorts of fairings and little knick-knacks, which they gave and threw to the women and maidens and other folk at the windows; and, among other things, they gave many soup-ladles of wood and pewter, but mostly of wood, some very prettily and fairly worked and carved at the handles. The scene was strange indeed for any man who had never seen it before. It was a pilgrimage and journey rather of

¹ Medieval writers were nearly always sufficiently ignorant of Mahomedanism to believe that it was a sort of idol-worship.



PILGRIMAGE TO THE OLD CHURCH OF THE BEAUTIFUL VIRGIN
AT REGENSBURG



malediction than of devotion, wherein ten thousand mortal sins were yearly wrought, what with drunkenness and quarrels, homicides and lechery, blasphemies, execrable oaths, and other great and enormous sins and wickedness. For the greater part went thither rather for pastime, folly, and youth, and for the sake of evil-doing, both men and women and young folk, than for devotion. They also did much harm to the farmers and labourers, in their lands and their fruit trees and so forth; for, wheresoever these folk had passed, there everything was spoiled, cut, and carried away, both the fruits and the green leaves for adornment's sake with foliage and verdure, and for greater coolness, seeing that this journey took place in full heat of summer. And there was also another danger, that the greater part of the common folk were then heated and moved, and, when they thus came running into the city, crying and howling with the said saint's body, they were always somewhat inclined to some commotion, thronging thus on the great Friday market-place, round which they went thrice, running with the shrine and crying as folk who had lost all their wits and memory and understanding; then it would have needed but a small thing to move them, and to set the whole city of Ghent in great disarray and disorder, as it had several times come to pass [here and at the similar feast of Taue Wet]. And during those two feasts many good folk, and especially in the monasteries and other places of devotion, were in prayer and orisons, that God of His grace might please to let those feasts pass without mishap. And as to abolishing them and putting them down, the common folk, who were great in that city, would never have suffered it, if it had not been for the manner wherein this was finally done by the Emperor, now that he was in power within the city, and through the castle which he had built there [to overawe it]. Thus was St Liévin now served and honoured within the church, and no longer carried out; which was a very good work and of very great merit to those who wrought it, notwithstanding that the men of Ghent were in great wrath.¹

¹ For interesting cases of relics carried abroad, see *Eiflia Sacra*, I, 402, 406.

CHAPTER VIII

PIOUS THEFTS

THE principle of pious theft, so readily admitted everywhere in the Middle Ages, had naturally special force in the field of relics: it received semi-official approval at a very early date. Cassian's *Collationes* [420] was a sort of Bible of the monks; a portion was read publicly every evening in well-ordered monasteries, and, by a curious transference, the informal bite and sup which accompanied it have given the name of *collation* to any informal meal. Dionysius Cartusianus, a thousand years after Cassian, quotes from him the story of certain monks slain by the Bedouins: men of such holiness, and so revered for their martyrdom, "that numberless folk from two cities met in conflict, and strove so fiercely that even swords came into play for this holy prey; since the cities contended against each other, with pious devotion, to decide which could most justly claim the sepulchres and relics of these martyrs". Cassian shows no sense of scandal here; on the contrary, the bitterness of the fight vouches for the value of the corpses; and if, in the next three chapters, he undertakes to justify the ways of Providence, his real difficulty is to explain "the long-suffering of God, who had permitted men of such merit [as these monks] to be thus slaughtered [by the Bedouins]".¹

A similar story, of much the same time, is told by Gregory of Tours concerning St Martin, who by that time had become the patron saint of the Frankish kings: they carried about with them as a talisman his cloak (*capella*); hence the modern word *chapel*. Gregory writes:

When first the man of God began to fall sick at Candes, the people of Poitiers came to his deathbed, and those of Tours likewise. When he gave up the ghost, a great contest arose between the two multitudes. For they of Poitiers said "He is our monk; he was our abbot; we demand that he should be given over to us. Let it suffice you that, while he was bishop alive, you enjoyed his conversation and ate with him and were confirmed by his blessing and rejoiced by his

¹ Dion. Cartus. *Opp.* v, 58; Cassian, *Collationes*, vi, c. 1.

miracles. Let all these things suffice you; and let us at least bear away his lifeless corpse." Whereunto the men of Tours answered "If you bid us be content with the miracles which he wrought with us, know ye that among you he worked more than here [with us]. For, to omit many things, he raised two of you from the dead, but only one of us; and he himself oftentimes confessed that he had more spiritual power before his consecration as bishop, than after. Therefore whatsoever he fulfilled not with us in life, he must needs fulfil now in death; for God hath taken him away from you and given him to us. Moreover, if we are to keep to the ancient usage, he shall be buried, by God's will, in the city wherein he was ordained. If you will claim privilege for any monastery, know ye that his first monastery was at Milan." While they thus contended, the sun went down and night fell upon them, and the body was guarded by the two parties, lying midway between them, while the doors were locked. It seemed as though they of Poitiers, at daybreak, would violently carry it away; but God Almighty was not willing to disappoint the city of Tours of its own patron saint. At length, towards midnight, the whole troop of Poitevins was overcome with sleep, nor was there one of that multitude who kept his waking senses. When therefore they of Tours saw them sleeping, they laid hold of the mortal remains of this most holy body and, while some cast it forth from the window, others caught it outside; then the whole band floated down the river Vienne and, carried thus into the current of the Loire, they steered to Tours with loud praises and abundant psalmody. The men of Poitiers, aroused by their voices, and finding naught of the treasure which they guarded, returned in confusion to their own city.¹

Cases of this kind were so frequent that Charles the Great published a capitulary designed to restrict such extravagances of relic-worship. The great seventeenth-century scholar Baluze writes:

Charles published that decree because, in his day, some monks raved in false relics... Hence came all those fables of thefts of holy bodies, as when the clergy of Ratisbon believe that they possess that of St Denis stolen from Paris... Again, the clergy of Salzburg boast the body of St Martin, stolen from Tours... Again, in the reign of Louis le Débonnaire, my own compatriots stole St Gregory the Great and laid him in the abbey of St-Médard at Soissons, if that be true which Bollandus recounts in his *Acta Sanctorum*.²

He goes on to enumerate the theft of St-Dié, in the ninth

¹ Lib. I, c. xxxv (48); ed. Omont (1886), I, 26, reading *Verum si mos for*
irum scimus.

² Mansi, *Concilia*, xviii, 753.

century, and the Ely-St Albans case, to which we shall come in another context.

A suspected theft of St Geneviève's head, "the Jewel of France", from its Paris monastery took the proportion of a grave political crisis; the king was involved, and the Archbishop of Sens with all his suffragans. At the bare rumour of this theft, however "pious", the city of Paris was stirred to its depths, and the king "swore by the Holy One of Bethlehem that, if this proved true, he would scourge all the canons and thrust them forth from the monastery".¹ This was in 1162. In [1250] St-Martin-de-Laon possessed the left arm of St Laurence the Martyr, which one of the brethren "by a pious theft, according to the manner of that time", had picked up in Hungary and brought across to France. It claimed to have been brought from Rome to Antioch and from Antioch to Hungary.² St Mark's body was, of course, at Venice; so the world in general believed. But, in [925], the Bishop of Constance "proclaimed most solemnly, in full synod, that it lay at Reichenau; that bishop Ratold of Verona had smuggled it away from Venice with the greatest secrecy, under the name of St Valentine, and that the miracles wrought by it now proved conclusively that the monks of Reichenau possessed the real Mark".³ Thorne, the monk of St Augustine's at Canterbury, has nothing but praise and triumph for the theft of St Mildred's relics from Minster in Thanet to the advantage of his own abbey. The men of Minster raised the hue and cry, and followed the pious thieves "with swords and cudgels and great plenty of weapons, panting to snatch back the body of the glorious virgin", but it was too late, and "they returned as baffled men".⁴ A relic in those days was even more defenceless than a woman. After the fire which almost destroyed Säckingen in 1268,

the venerable lady abbess returned to her cloister in the town, and found the relics of St Fridolin [unburned]. She held counsel with her nuns as to what they should do with these relics of their patron

¹ I have translated the whole episode in *Life in the M. Ages* (iv, 186 ff.) from *AA. SS. Boll.* App. 6, 1, 626.

² Hugo, vol. 1, col. 64.

³ Brandi, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. xii. See p. xi for the importance of such "translations" in the monastic literature of Reichenau.

⁴ Twysden, col. 1910; Davis, p. 241.

saint. They said unto her: "If we transfer them to a great place, as for instance Bâle, then the bishops and canons will retain them by violence. If, again, we commit them to the keeping of the Friars Minor or Preachers or other Religious, then the bishop will violently bear them away."

They therefore committed them to the keeping of the Count of Habsburg, as a neighbouring lord capable of defending them by force of arms.¹ And (to quote two other instances from the same Dominican chronicle) "a certain monk stole relics from the nuns of St Mark [in Alsace]". This was in 1274; five years later the nunnery of Niedermünster was robbed of the crown from its crucifix "together with many relics".² I do not remember any case in which the theft of a relic is recounted with serious blame, except where the story is told by the victims themselves. Therefore it was a very rare favour indeed which the Cistercians of Kamp granted to a powerful prince in 1322. For the abbot formally lent the body of St Margaret to the Duke of Kleve, who had begged for it "out of special affection and desire", to be kept in the church of Kleve during the duke's life; then, however, it was to be "restored without any contradiction soever at the demand of the said abbot and convent".³

If, then, the possession of an important relic was an end which justified almost any means, it is natural that we should find this a fruitful source of monastic quarrels. These we have already seen in glimpses; but they figure so largely in history, and are sometimes so picturesque, that it is worth studying two or three in detail.

One of the greatest of all was the war (as we may truly call it) which was waged concerning the remains of St Antony of Vienne, the patron saint of the famous St Antony's Swine, which alone were privileged to run and rout about in London streets, while the law for all others ran: "He that will nourish a pig, let him nourish it in his own house." In this particular case I need give no details, since a very valuable résumé of original fifteenth-

¹ *Ann. Colmar*, p. 256. The description of the behaviour of these relics luring their sojourn at the castle of Habsburg is entertaining.

² *Ibid.* pp. 40, 86.

³ Eckertz, II, 374. A similar story is recorded by Saintyves, p. 171: in 1422 our Henry V borrowed the *sanctum preputium* of Coulombs in order that it might be by Catharine's bedside and bless the birth of Henry VI.

century documents can be found in a little monograph which is easily accessible. I need only quote from that monograph the general judgements of the Benedictine of 1650 who wrote a history of one of the two contending monasteries.¹

The devotion to St Anthony was widely spread in France; but it became an occasion for divers scandals. In order to guard the possession of his relics for this country, men invented old wives' tales; and the profits drawn from this precious deposit became a cause of the most costly lawsuits and a source of the most grievous dissensions between two religious Orders; of troubles which gave occasion for scenes of violence and pillage, for murders and for the complete destruction of divine worship. Christian charity would compel us in duty to say nothing of these disorders, as ridiculous as they were unworthy of Religious folk; but from the point of view of history, which aims at instruction by a narrative of facts, we are forced to speak of them. Human passions were let loose, and so defiled men who were vowed to God's service, that they betrayed them into acts which would be judged blamable on the part of mercenaries and brutal soldiers.

It may suffice to add that the last campaign of this war was fought at the Council of Bâle, and lasted from 1434 to 1438. The victors here were the Benedictines of Montmajour; and their victory, added to the enormous expenses of litigation, reduced the Antonines to such poverty that they are found complaining in 1489 "four or five of our abbots have died of poverty, misery and melancholy incontinently one after the other, so that in less than a hundred years full eleven abbots of this monastery have died".²

For picturesqueness, on the other hand, it would be hard to find anything to equal the contest between St Albans and Ely. This was one of the *causes célèbres* of the English Middle Ages; it lasted at least two centuries and a half. Froude told it long ago in his *Annals of an English Abbey*; it may be retold here with more of the original chroniclers' own words. Naturally, the Ely and the St Albans writers differ a good deal, and we hear most

¹ Abbé L. Maillet-Guy, *St-Antoine et Montmajour au Concile de Bâle*, procurable at about 2s. from the author, who is now Aumônier at Voiteur (Jura) and was formerly Sub-librarian at the Academy of Lyon. The quotation here given occurs on p. 45, and is taken from C. Chantelou, *Hist. de Montmajour* (1650).

² Maillet-Guy, p. 48.

from the side of St Albans, in whose favour both Rome and royalty decided; but the main points seem clear enough.¹ Both Ely and St Albans agree that, for fear of the invading Danes, St Albans sent her protomartyr's bones, or seemed to send them, for safe custody to Ely, which was then a real island. Ely claimed from thenceforth continual possession; but the contrary tradition is given very fully by Matthew Paris. His brethren of St Albans (he writes) had been wise in their generation; they had ostentatiously sent the relics of another holy monk, in a costly chest, to Ely, while they immured those of St Alban secretly under their own altar of St Nicholas. When the Danish terror was past, they sent to Ely for their deposit; but these faithless trustees "hatched an unjust resolve never to give up that which St Albans had entrusted to them": for they had no fear of Edward the Confessor, then old and feeble. St Albans threatened appeal to pope as well as to king. Ely then fell back upon fraud; the conspicuous shrine was emptied of the bones sent from St Albans, and was returned with public pomp, filled with "certain adulterine bones". St Albans (this is still Matthew's story) scented the trick. It "received that shrine, lest the fraud of the Ely monks should breed scandal among the people, and thus Religion should be altogether befouled and defamed", and put it over the altar of St Oswin, in a chest which was used for the disused corporals. Ely, meanwhile, proudly retained those second-rate relics which had been sent to them under show of the protomartyr's. The Confessor heard of this, and blazed up into wrath; but his death saved Ely from condign vengeance. Later, in 1077, Abbot Frederic of St Albans died in exile at Ely: "wherefore the Ely monks, lying in their teeth, asserted that he had brought St Alban's bones thither, not fearing to impose upon that holy man the crime of sacrilege". Matthew cannot prevent the "Elienses" from flaunting their own adulterine relics, but he consoles himself with philosophical contempt.

They have kept them for themselves, and let them keep them to all eternity! And if the aforesaid martyr Alban is honoured hence-

¹ *Short Studies* (1877), III, 22; *Liber Eliensis*, p. 227; *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. pp. 34ff., 37, 51ff., 87, 175; Walsingham, *Hist. Ang.* R.S. I, 138; *V.C.H. Herts*, IV, 367ff.; II, 483.

forth at Ely, and, being honoured, worketh miracles, then we Albanensians ought to desire that he might be believed to lie not only there but in every great church of England, in order that he might receive the greater honour in the greater number of places.

Yet this philosophical detachment, even if it was entirely unaffected, proved insufficient. In [1130], when brother Anketil of St Albans, "an incomparable goldsmith", was working laboriously at a new shrine for the relics, his secular disciple, Solomon of Ely, cast natural doubts upon their authenticity. One night, the protomartyr himself appeared to Anketil, thanked him for his labours, and promised: "I shall lie in this work of thine hands until the Day of Judgement." This was scarcely calculated to carry conviction at Ely, nor was it conclusive even at home. Nearly a century later [1220] we find that "certain brethren [of St Albans] were contending concerning this matter", until one of them saw the saint issuing plainly from his shrine, and received the command to go and testify to the rest. Yet, long before this, a judgement had been given which might have been expected to be final. Abbot Robert (1151-66) had gone to Rome, had obtained "a special and lengthy colloquy with the pope, as a friend is wont to speak with a friend", and had thus achieved a success which the chronicler records "as the coping-stone of his titles" to our gratitude. He represented that Ely still maintained its false boast, and besought that an impartial commission of three bishops might be appointed to examine. The Confessor's enquiry (he pleaded) had been lukewarm, and had only bred contempt. "Holy Father, it is for you . . . to confirm them that are staggering, even as the Lord said unto Peter, and in Peter unto thee 'Do thou in due time confirm thy brethren' . . . lest [these Ely monks] suffer damnation of their souls." The pope graciously acceded: the abbot came home with his mandate to the three bishops "which mandate they faithfully obeyed, and listened to the abbot's prayers, and inclined to his munificence (lest they should complain of the labour and expense) and came in person to Ely". There they showed the papal bull, and put twelve of the oldest and discreetest brethren upon their solemn oath, under pain of excommunication. These, with that terror in view, "unanimously protested that they had been deceived by a pious fraud; that, in spite of

this [pious intention] they had grievously sinned and committed sacrilege; and thus they had not possessed the martyr's relics". So writes Matthew Paris; yet, after his death, it became plain that even Peter's confirmation was not final, and that souls must still be in danger at the great Fen monastery. Walsingham, the last of the great St Albans historians, tells us how Edward II, in 1314, came first to St Albans and afterwards to Ely. He visited Ely cathedral, and saw there the shrine called St Alban's. Then he said to the bishop: "Thou knowest that my brethren at St Albans think they have the true body of this same martyr in their church; and here the monks say they have the same saint's body. By God's soul, I will see in which spot I ought rather to venerate the relics of this most holy body!" The monks "as men whose blood had left their body, knew not how to answer or what to do". The bishop told them they must come to the cathedral and allow Edward to see the actual contents of their shrine. It was opened by Alan de Walsingham, then sacrist and afterwards prior, famous now for the lantern tower which he thought out. Nothing was found in it but a rough piece of hairy cloth, which entirely filled the casket, and which was explained as being the cloak which St Amphibalus had given to St Alban on his conversion.

A remarkable Italian case shows still more clearly the overwhelming force of local patriotism and popular prejudice in these matters, and the comparative impotence of even the highest ecclesiastical authorities: factors which prompted the Louvain canonist Van Espen to complain that we are here faced with an exact parallel to *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*!¹

At Reggio, in Emilia, the bones of St Prospero were fought over from 1144 to 1595 with a fierceness, a pertinacity, and an unscrupulousness on one or other of the two sides, which may almost be described as civil war. The whole story is told, under different years of his annals, by the Benedictine Dom Affarosi, in his bulky history of his own abbey.² Reggio had a bishop of that name about A.D. 460, whom tradition gradually identified with the famous writer Prosper Aquitanus, secretary to Leo the

¹ *Jus Canon.* (1724), I, 990; see my Appendix to ch. VII.

² Vol. I, pp. 6ff., 98ff., 229, 297-306; vol. II, pp. 56-66, 206, 210ff., 225-8, 233, 239-49; cf. p. 33.

Great, but on grounds recognized as frivolous by the great Jesuit scholar Sirmond, and evidently doubted by Affarosi himself. The city of Reggio, like others in Northern Italy, grew rapidly in wealth and population during the centuries which followed the cessation of barbarian invasions; the abbey of St Prospero seems to have been founded about 990, and it shared the rising fortunes of the city. Its church was one of the finest in Italy; it boasted princes among its occasional guests; its vassals and squires were numerous.

Therefore (writes Dom Affarosi) we need not wonder that the Infernal Enemy envied such felicity, and raised bloody conflicts against the abbey, at all times, in order both to steal its wealth and to diminish its credit.... Certain rumours were spread abroad in the city, tending to the assertion that the abbey church no longer possessed the holy ashes of the glorious saints Prospero, Venerio and Gioconda.... This calumny took occasion from the frivolous desire of certain ecclesiastics of the venerable church of S. Prospero di Castello.¹ These men felt it highly repugnant to the majesty and glory of their own temple, that they themselves should possess no more than the bare title of their glorious protector S. Prospero, and that meanwhile this Sacred Body must be worshipped in the other church, that of the monks, whereunto there flowed continually all honours paid to the Saint with the oblations of the people, an ordinary motive of discord. Therefore they imagined a counterstroke, and invented this rumour in order to shake the popular belief in the truth, and thus to compel our abbot and his monks, for the sake of peace and quiet, either to grant them the Sacred Body or at least the moiety thereof. The barbarity of those ages, even as it had brought in as a common characteristic the cruelty of secular folk, who tore each other to pieces in spite of the closest kinship, so also, for the most part, it left a certain root of bitterness even in those persons who were consecrated to the worship of God, leading them to dispute with the utmost impropriety concerning even the most sacred things. We must not marvel, therefore, if certain ecclesiastics of the aforesaid collegiate church sought to arouse such a persuasion among the common folk, and (what is more) to support it by violence.

They persuaded the bishop, only too willing to believe it for the honour of his Castello, that in some remote century the real bones of St Prospero had been brought thither for safety from

¹ This was a collegiate church within the same fortified enclosure as the cathedral and the bishop's palace.

“a certain flood or inundation of waters, whereof however they brought not the smallest evidence”. Therefore

by night, behind closed doors...at the instance of the clergy of this church, he caused the stones below the high altar to be broken open, and there he found certain caskets filled with bones and ashes which he took for relics of saints (as indeed they probably were, since that is the usual custom when any church or altar is erected). Thus without any sign, or the least proof, they took it for granted that these were the true bones of S. Prospero...Next day, therefore, the bishop assembled the people to the sound of the bells, and gave them to understand that he had found the true body of their Glorious Protector. There was much rumour among the people, and especially among the common folk (who for the most part were rude and inclined by nature to novelty) at such an unlooked-for proclamation...Thus there arose a very great schism among the commons and the nobility (who for the most part are always better advised) and even among the clergy, and among those of S. Prospero di Castello themselves, as is attested by certain witnesses' depositions at that time.

The abbot, very reasonably, challenged his opponents to come to the abbey, not secretly by night but in open conclave, to verify the monks' relics. The bishop

sought to put this visit off and off, perchance with the object of never making it. However, moved from day to day by the continual visits and supplications of the abbot, he sought at last to acquit himself by making the proposal hatched [in the cathedral]. This was that, in order to assuage all tumult, he should grant to the cathedral church the half of that Body which he held, and that the cathedral clergy for their part should give the half of theirs to the monks. The holy abbot, hearing this, could not restrain himself from bursting out into exclamations of liveliest zeal, saying, “Alas! who ever heard so frivolous and so abominable a thing! Here is the most holy and glorious Body of S. Prospero, which the whole realm knows to have been laid by our bishop Thomas of holy memory, four hundred and forty four years ago, in the place which the Saint himself had chosen in his lifetime, and which we have worshipped almost from our cradle; and now we are to be compelled to accept a half or some smaller part of a divided body, coming from we know not whom or whence! To God we render praise and thanks for the possession of S. Prospero's whole body. God forbid, then, that we should accept, under the name of S. Prospero, any portion of that Saint of yours whom you say you have found; for, possessing the whole, we will

take no half. But we beseech you again and again, that you will do as becomes your office and your honour, and come, as we have already invited you, with your clergy and the people to our abbey."

The bishop refused; and the monks appealed to the papal legate in Lombardy, the future Celestine II. After two more refusals from the bishop, the legate insisted upon a reasonable enquiry. Four other bishops came with their clergy, and five abbots. After Mass at the high altar, it was opened in presence of the assembly

and, to the infinite jubilation of the monks, they found the true Body of S. Prospero, authenticated by most ancient inscriptions and seals of lead, and other indubitable signs; for there issued from that sacred mausoleum an odour of Paradise, sufficient in itself to show how precious was this treasure in God's sight. Infinite, therefore, was the consolation throughout the city; for the people were distressed at the growth of such a controversy, and were pained to hang in doubt of the true place where these sacred relics should be worshipped.

The bishop gave way, and consented to call in the Archbishop of Ravenna, his metropolitan, for a solemn consecration of the altar of St Prospero. This function was performed in 1148 in the presence of three bishops and a multitude of monks and clergy, "with a pomp commensurate with the majesty of this church and the wealth of the abbey. . . . He laid in all three altars, and within the sepulchres of the Holy Bodies themselves, an authentic memorial of this deed." The disappointed claimants of Castello revenged themselves by denouncing the abbot, soon afterwards, during the wars between Church and State which began again to divide Italy. They procured his banishment by the emperor; 30 monks went out with him; and, although the abbey still remained wealthy, these troubles were the beginning of its decay.

In 1281, a bishop *in partibus* visited another collegiate church at Reggio, that of St Pietro. He there consecrated an altar which claimed to possess relics not only of Christ's sepulchre and garments, and some milk of the Holy Virgin, but also of Sts Prospero, Venerio, and Gioconda. Affarosi records this with only a passing note of scepticism.

But in 1369 a fresh chapter opens. The chronic civil wars had driven the monks of St Prospero from their great abbey in the suburbs, now partly ruined, into the city itself. The monks, fearing the theft of their relics, applied in that year to Urban V, who granted them leave "to translate to their dependent priory of St Matthew within the City the Bodies of the holy confessors Prospero and Venerio and of the virgin Gioconda, which are said to be buried in the abbey aforesaid". The monks, armed with this bull, prepared for an imposing ceremony; but "no sooner was this papal licence for translating the Holy Relics published throughout the city and diocese, than all the spirits of discord and envy and grudging were unchained from the lowest depths of hell, and, creeping into the city, they inspired divers persons, and specially certain of the clergy at S. Prospero di Castello". When the abbot brought his invitation to the bishop, "he answered that the truth of the exposition was uncertain; meanwhile, there was talk on both sides throughout the city, and he ran a risk of exposing a whole population to the evident peril of an uncertain cult, and perhaps even an idolatrous worship". The abbot showed his documentary proofs, and besought him to come and verify for himself the presence of the bodies at the old abbey. He consented; the altar was again opened in presence of clergy and people; and he was able to read the formal record of visit and verification left there on parchment by the Archbishop of Ravenna in 1148. This time, again, the odour of sanctity was diffused among the assembly.

From thence the bishop went direct to Castello; where, causing the altar to be opened, he caused the so-called bones of S. Prospero to be taken out; they lay in a little casket with a single more recent plate of metal, whereon was written *Body and Relics of S. Prospero, your bishop at Reggio*, and which had been made (as report said) by a certain Nicolà Cambiatore, who had been archpriest of the cathedral not long before. The bishop ordered these to be brought into the sacristy of the cathedral and kept there.... Nothing now remained but that all men should await the long-desired day of the solemn translation. But those infernal furies which, for all their efforts, had not been able to hinder the discovery of these ashes, were now all in disdain and envy, and eager to turn the world upside down in order at least to hinder the translation.

The canons of Castello sought this occasion for getting, if not all, at least half of the bodies.

They represented to the governor of the city the evident peril of sedition or tumult which might justly be anticipated, and might only too easily be fulfilled, at the assembly of so great a multitude in times of such peril and such inclination to revolt. No more was needed to arouse the governor's suspicions; he issued a strict command to the abbot to think no more of so public a function, since it was not for the glory of God or of His saints to give occasion for sedition by an untimely assembly of the multitude, even though it were on pretext of devotion.

The abbot and his monks had to content themselves with a private translation to the church of S. Matteo, which they recorded on fresh plates of lead laid in the coffins.

In 1453, a fresh dispute arose between the monks and the canons of Castello. Therefore the abbot again begged the bishop to come for a solemn verification. The marble coffins were again opened, and the inscriptions read; after which

the bishop went up into his throne and, commanding silence, protested in a loud and clear voice his belief that these bones and relics were truly those of Saints Prospero, Venerio and Gioconda, . . . then, for greater contentment of the whole multitude there assembled, he took one of those glorious relics and carried it with great devotion round the church, in sight of the people. The six notaries who recorded this in a public document tell us, in their rude Latin, that the people with great compunction "seeing and beholding such and so great a most devout relic, of so devout a saint, fell into the greatest devotion, and, seeing the lord bishop and all his clergy do these things, they bent on their knees, the men among the said multitude baring their heads, and all, both male and female, both old and young and little children, crying with one voice *Mercy, Mercy!* and groaning with immense weeping they worshipped the aforesaid relics and bones".

The canons of Castello met this by persuading the bishop to visit their bones also; this was done "without inviting the clergy and the senate (whose refusal perchance they feared) as the day was darkening on the 21st of November". The bishop was sufficiently impressed to say "it is pious to believe that these also are of the true bodies of Saints Prospero, Venerio and Gioconda, or at least a great part of them": he had the bells rung, and

carried one of the relics publicly round the square in front of the church. The abbot, hearing what had happened, appealed at once to the pope against this hole-and-corner manoeuvre. The pope granted a brief permitting the abbot to raise the sarcophagi publicly to a more conspicuous place in his church, and to proclaim an indulgence of 7 years and 7 times 40 days to all who attended this ceremony or its anniversary in future.

There seems to have been another lull until 1551, the year in which Duke Ercole d' Este completed the fortifications of Reggio by pulling down, or building into his walls, the original abbey and fifteen other monasteries or churches: "moved thereunto" (writes the contemporary churchman who records the deed) "by the war between Duke Ottavio Farnese of Parma and Pope Julius III, which involved Reggio in very grievous losses, inconveniences, and suspicions." Though it was nearly 100 years since the monks had received formal papal permission to lodge their relics publicly in a manner more consonant with the glory due to them, yet they had never once succeeded in disarming the opposition of bishops and government, both of which parties dreaded a popular tumult. At last, in 1551, permission was given to transfer the bodies "at night-time, in a coach decently ornamented", and to lay them upon three altars carved for them by noted sculptors. The monks (writes Affarosi) were bitterly disappointed not to show greater honour: but the bishop had forbidden any concourse of the faithful under ecclesiastical and pecuniary penalties, and the duke had publicly forbidden "the presence of a multitude of people at this reconstitution". The abbot set up an inscription in his church, claiming possession of all three Saints; and this at once provoked the bishop (already nettled by the number of people who had disobeyed him and attended the ceremony) to protest. The abbot thereupon appealed to Rome, begging for an impartial judicial commission to give a final judgement which might be ratified by apostolic authority. The pope appointed the bishop of neighbouring Modena as his judge delegate. The Bishop of Reggio and the canons managed to drag the affair out until the pope was dead, and the Bishop of Modena called away to Rome on more pressing business. Meanwhile, stratagems were employed by those who feared "that the coming of these sacred Relics into the city might

cause grievous prejudice and diminution to the cult of those others which were kept at the collegiate church". As a natural consequence, "the minds of devout persons wavered to and fro amidst these uncertainties as to which church had the relics which should be worshipped; and thus the Devil pushed his own business, diminishing devotion by little and little". The senate, finally, repudiated a tribute which they had paid from time immemorial to the abbey. Therefore at last, in 1579, the abbot procured a fresh papal brief, naming a fresh Bishop of Modena as judge. Every excuse was still found for delay, until in 1589 the abbot procured yet another papal rescript (this time from Sixtus V). He decreed that the governor, with a representative of the abbey, should first open the monks' shrines and inspect the relics with all diligence. If the contents were not found as professed, then they need go no further. If, however, they were such as to supply *prima facie* evidence, then the commission must go on to the collegiate church, open and inspect the shrines there, and come to a decision upon the rival claims. If the monks are found to have the true relics, then a solemn public translation is to take place, and the pope grants

a plenary indulgence and remission of all their sins to all Christian folk of either sex, truly penitent and confessed and refreshed with the Holy Communion, who are present at the said translation and there pray piously to God for the exaltation of the Holy Roman Church, the extirpation of heresy, the conversion of unbelievers, and whatsoever else each man's devotion may suggest.

This seemed plain enough: but the canons of the collegiate church at once demurred: they demanded that the bishop should order the first visit to be made to their relics, and not to the monks. The bishop proposed this to the abbot, who replied that for himself he did not fear this change; but that it could legally be made only by the pope. So they and the bishop sent a supplication to the pope; and he, "cast into perplexity", referred the matter to the Council of Trent, which was then sitting. The abbot saw that this meant a delay of years: but he inclined his head. Five years passed in fact, and four popes died, before the next step was taken. The new pope, Clement VIII, was a personal friend of the Bishop of Reggio, who sent him a plea in favour of the canons which was most adroitly conceived, if only it had

not violated historical truth in almost every sentence. The real force of his case lay in this, that the original abbey was now destroyed; that its relics were translated to an unpretending little church inside the walls; and that the present monks were a mere handful in comparison with their original congregation, and were even more diminished in prestige than in numbers; while, on the other hand, the canons had steadily grown richer and more socially influential. The contrast was undeniable between the pitiful surroundings in one church and the magnificence of the other, which the citizens looked upon as their own and took a pride in. Therefore the pope decided "that, when the relics at both churches had been inspected, the body of St Prospero, wheresoever it might be found, should be given to the canons, and that of St Venerio to the monks". The abbot protested, and obtained a brief referring the matter again to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Meanwhile he sought to remove St Prospero's shame by beautifying the chapel in which the relics lay, by setting up a fresh inscription, and by advertising a solemn ceremony on St Prospero's day (June 25). The advertisement had much success, according to Affarosi; "but the Devil, who will always thrust himself in even among the most sacred rites, in order to destroy or diminish, if possible, the Creator's glory, so contrived that certain of the malcontents noted with displeasure the aforesaid inscription", and complained to the bishop. The abbot, while protesting that the inscription asserted nothing beyond notorious facts, removed it for the sake of peace and substituted another less explicit. Yet, even so, "certain of the most unquiet spirits of the collegiate church came secretly to the abbey, where, unobserved, they cancelled the words with lampblack and some other more tenacious liquid. The monks, advised of this, came up too late, and, for their own part, showed their resentment with irreligious indecency; some, indeed, assert that the altercation became so hot that men came to menaces, words, and more violent assaults." The bishop, the governor and the citizens were shocked at this scandal; and the Congregation of Rites realized the danger of further delay. Both parties were summoned to send their evidence to Rome. The canons sent in a plea divided into seven chapters: the monks showed that these rested partly on unsupported tradition and partly on assertions

capable of documentary disproof. They were sanguine of success, until suddenly, Monsignor Toschi, uncle to the provost of the collegiate church, was raised to the purple. His zealous advocacy turned the scales in the Congregation, and Clement VIII gave a decision which dashed all hopes to the ground (1595). He commissioned the Bishops of Modena, Mantua and Reggio, with representatives of both the contending parties and four or five grave and trustworthy witnesses, to inspect both churches, and, wherever the true bodies were found, to lay that of St Prospero for perpetual custody in the collegiate church, and that of St Venerio in the abbey. "Yet one whole member of St Venerio (so it be not his head) shall be given to the canons of St Prospero [in Castello]; and one whole member of St Prospero (so it be not his head) shall be given to the abbot and monks of the aforesaid monastery." The decree was received with mixed feelings in the city; and the partisans of the monks urged them to further defensive efforts. "But the monks, either through weariness or through resignation, or in despair of any easy success against so authoritative a protector, submitted, adoring in silence the eternal and inscrutable decrees of the Most Highest, and humbling themselves perfectly under the holy decisions of the Pastor of the Universal Church." It is a characteristic indication of the extent to which men thought of the cash-nexus in connexion with relics, that the wilder spirits among the canons now claimed "that the Holy Body should be followed [in its translation to them] by the whole revenues of the abbey". The pope, however, repudiated this claim.

Affarosi tells all this tale with the same moderation which he shows throughout his history, in spite of his affection for his own abbey. And, writing nearly a century and a half after the quarrel, in a critical age, he sums it up with a pious philosophy which does him much credit. He cannot admit the justice of this decree; yet he is heartily glad

that there is now a perpetual pacification and termination of the long-drawn, costly, and most bitter controversies between our monks and a collegiate church of such repute, antiquity, and nobility. And albeit, by hidden and incomprehensible judgements, we are no longer possessors of so precious a treasure, we cannot but feel a most tender and indescribable content at seeing the relics kept with such honour

by so distinguished a body of clergy, in a temple so noble and majestic, adored with such devotion of the whole people, without further peril of trouble or misadventure. For it matters little for the increase of our devotion to know of what province or nation our Saint may be; since it is certain that, even as this cannot add to his own glory, so it cannot diminish devotion in the people. So long as men are certain of his assistance and most merciful protection (even as we daily see the effects thereof) it matters little whether he be of one country or of another.

Here is another Italian case. A desperate quarrel broke out in 1293 between the canons of Genoa Cathedral and the monks of San Siro, each party claiming the sole possession of the bones of St Siro, a fourth-century bishop of that city. The Blessed Giacomo da Varazze (*de Varagine*), the famous author of the Golden Legend, who was then archbishop, publicly opened the tomb at the cathedral and (as he wrote in his own *Chronicle*) "found all the bones necessary to the composition of a human body". Then, on St Siro's day, he mounted the pulpit, "showed the bones to the multitude, frantic with joy"; and, at his provincial synod, he intimated to the monks of San Siro that they must never henceforth presume to expose "their pretended relics of the Saint" for public veneration. But the monks, for their part, had discovered a receptacle containing a full funeral urn and a leaden tablet recording that it contained the bones of St Siro; the result was a lawsuit between the two churches which lasted down to 1456, and was terminated only then by a sentence to the effect that the bones had been divided, so that each litigant might claim to possess half. The good priest who has written the church history of this province remarks pertinently that it would have been wiser in the archbishop to call in the best surgeon of the city and procure expert opinion on this question of a whole or a half skeleton: "but the conditions of those dark ages were very different from our own", and his error was natural for the time.¹

We may now pass to France, in conclusion of a series which might be extended almost *ad infinitum*. The relics of St-Loup, Archbishop of Sens, who was said to have died in 623, were fought over for more than three centuries.² The monks of

¹ Semeria, I, 96, 120 ff.

² See F. Bourquelot in *Bib. Éc. Chartes* (1840-1), II, 255 ff.

St-Loup-du-Naud claimed to possess a portion of his skull and skeleton, with one of his rings. Those of Ste-Colombe-de-Sens were able to show a charter by which, in 1160, the then archbishop testified to having opened St-Loup's tomb in their abbey, to have found skull and body complete, and then, at the command of Hadrian IV, to have associated himself with two other bishops and exposed the relics to the multitude in order to remove all misunderstanding. Yet

the monks of St-Loup-du-Naud continued none the less to claim authenticity for their relics. Popes themselves took an interest in the discussion. Innocent III, in 1214, appointed a commission of enquiry; Alexander IV, in 1260, favoured the monks of Ste-Colombe; later on, Urban IV granted a bull to the priory of St-Loup. The dispute grew bitter as time went on, and aroused the passions of the multitude, who took sides for one or other monastery according to their interests or inclinations. The provost of Sens was even compelled, in 1404, to prosecute a royal sergeant who, among other public insults to St-Loup-du-Naud, had gone so far as to say that this reliquary "contained nothing but hay". The dispute was embittered still further when the monks of Naud, according to the custom of those times, began to scour the country and offer their own St-Loup relics to the veneration of the faithful, begging at the same time for alms to repair the disasters which war had inflicted on their house.

The case was finally brought before the supreme royal court at Paris. The lawyers, without venturing to decide the main question of authenticity, decreed an economic compromise (1432).

The relics at Naud and at Ste-Colombe must always be carried together; and, whether they were confided to agents or farmers, or kept by the monks of the two houses, the produce of the begging tours was to be shared in the ratio of two-thirds for St-Loup-du-Naud and St-Pierre-le-Vif [its parent abbey], while one-third went to Ste-Colombe.¹

¹ Bouvier, pp. 147 ff. Compare p. 149, where the historian writes "nothing could be more curious than these wanderings of monks through town and county, always armed with the bishop's permission, and bearing the relics of Sts Potentinian and Altin, or other venerable relics, to work more efficaciously upon the charity of the faithful". He quotes a very curious case in which the St-Loup relics travelled as far as Les Sables d'Olonne, where a miller stole 33 marks of silver from the reliquary and was condemned to death. In about 1450, these relics were carried round at least seven French dioceses, and as far abroad as Albi and Cahors (*ibid.* p. 151). Another French case, the quarrel between Autun and Avallon over the bones of Lazarus, is dealt with briefly in a little monograph, *Le Culte de St-Lazare*, etc. by Abbé M. Gailly (Avallon, 1868).

CHAPTER IX

MONKS AND PARISHES

WE come now to what was by far the richest source of "spiritual" income to the monasteries, viz. the parochial tithes and revenues. This has been strangely neglected, until quite recently, in proportion to its historical importance. Let me quote from one of the few really scientific studies in English monastic history, A. Savine's *English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution*, published in Sir P. Vinogradoff's series (Oxford, 1909, pp. 91, 101, 107):

The spiritual revenues of the monasteries are mostly the revenues of such parish churches as had passed into the hands of the monks; the technical term is "appropriation".

The gross spiritual income—about forty thousand pounds—is nearly a fourth of the whole monastic gross income. This spiritual income is almost entirely derived from cathedrals and parish churches which have passed into the hands of the monks, the only items of a non-parochial character being the offerings at shrines which were the object of especial reverence; everything else is parochial income.

The bulk of the spiritual income of the monasteries consisted of tithes of different kinds, which evidently amounted to no less than five-sixths of the whole.

"Many abbeys", confessed Sir Thomas More, "have the great part [of their living] in benefices given and impropriated to them" (*English Works*, p. 333). De la Gorce, again, writing of the French Church in 1789, reckons the monastic income from tithes at 80 millions of *livres* a year, out of a total monastic income of 180,000,000.¹

This absorption of tithes by monasteries and, on a lesser scale, by cathedrals and collegiate churches, is the cause of the age-long distinction between rectories and vicarages.² A rector is a man

¹ Vol. I, p. 12; see again p. 21 and other important notices on pp. 27, 36.

² In this and the next chapter, I am mainly reproducing selections from what I have already printed in the *History Teachers' Miscellany* from Dec. 1925 to July 1926, and delivered in my Ford Lectures at Oxford in 1930. Since my *H.T.M.* articles the subject has been far more exhaustively treated, not only from the monastic but from the general point of view, by Dr R. A. R. Hartridge, whose early death this year is a great loss not only to his

(or corporation) receiving the full tithes of the parish; a vicar is (as the Latin *vicarius* expresses) a substitute; one who does indeed do the work, but does not receive the entire contributions which his parishioners are forced to make. The "great tithes" go to the rector; the vicar usually receives the remainder of the parish income; in the Middle Ages he did not always get all this remainder.

Tithes played a great part in medieval parish life, whether municipal or rural. To the peasant, they represented an income-tax of 2s. in the £, on the gross produce of his fields, without allowance for working expenses. There was scarcely any other department of life—perhaps no other—which led to such litigation. A whole system of death duties—the "mortuary", to which we shall come later—was founded on the assumption that the parishioner was almost sure to have evaded his legal liabilities for tithe-paying, to some extent at least. Yet such evasion, from the theological standpoint, involved the most serious risks of eternal damnation. Chaucer's Model Parson was full loth to curse his parishioners for their failings on this score; yet it was his unavoidable duty to do so solemnly, thrice or four times a year, from the pulpit.¹ And, after all, it was in mercy to them that he cursed. Dionysius Cartusianus writes, in his instructions to the clergy [1420]:

The priest must instruct his parishioners to pay their tithes promptly, devoutly, and with the utmost willingness; in the first

friends but to English historical scholarship (*Hist. of Vicarages in the M. Ages*, Camb. Univ. Press, 1930). Dr H. W. Saunders gives interesting details for one great monastery in Chapter v of his *Introduction to the Obedientiary and Manor Rolls of Norwich Cathedral Priory* (Norwich, 1930). For the formation and general history of parishes, we have now an excellent description by Professor E. W. Watson in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vi, ch. xvi. See also Ulrich Stutz, *Gesch. d. kirchlichen Benefizialwesens* (1895), and his article in *Göttingen gelehrte Anzeiger* (1904), to be compared with P. Imbart de la Tour in *Revue Historique*, vols. LX, LXI, LXIII, LXVII, LXVIII, republished as *Les paroisses rurales du 4^e au 11^e siècle* (Paris, Picard, 1900).

¹ Myrc's *Manual for Parish Priests* (E.E.T.S. 1868), written in Chaucer's lifetime, gives the curse in full (pp. 21-4). The withholder of tithes is classed with usurers, forgers, manslaughterers, burglars, witches, and those that abandon their children. The priest says: "We accurse them by the authority of the court of Rome, within or without, sleeping or waking, going and sitting, standing and riding, lying above earth and under earth, speaking and crying and drinking; in wood, in water, in field, in town: accurse them Father and Son and Holy Ghost: accurse them angels and archangels and all the ix orders of heaven;" etc.

place, because they cannot otherwise be saved: nay, they are condemned as sacrilegious persons who keep for their own use the goods that belong of right to the ministers of the Church... All this the priest may urge upon his parishioners without blame to himself; nay, he is even bound to do so, lest they incur damnation by neglecting this duty, and their pastor be damned with his flock.¹

We must begin by realizing how these contributions were dragged, as it were, from the entrails of the peasantry in order to understand the full significance of their diversion from the original purposes which justified so severe a tax.

In very early times, a theory grew up that the revenues of each parish should be divided into four equal parts; for the bishop, the clergy, the poor, and the upkeep of the church. The bishop gradually dropped out of this arrangement; so that the later theory divided the revenues into three portions; and this fraction, even in other connexions, occurs frequently in all kinds of divisions of church revenues.²

Yet, from as early as the records allow us to judge, it is quite evident that this ideal was not translated even into approximate practice. We must give due credit to those who framed the golden rule, and to those moralists who, from generation to generation, reminded men of it; but there is no age known to history, at least since the cessation of the pagan persecutions, in which they succeeded.³

There are few fields of history to which we may more exactly apply Professor Tout's remark that "all medieval laws were rather enunciations of an ideal than measures which practical statesmen aimed at carrying out in detail".⁴ What Chaucer's contemporary Bromyard writes concerning his own times may be said, with due allowance for the exaggerated language of an indignant moralist, concerning every century in the Dark and

¹ *Opera*, xxxvii, 282-3.

² Hartridge, p. 2. In Carolingian times, an attempt was made to earmark an even greater share for the destitute. A capitulary of Charles the Great, or possibly of Louis the Pious, prescribed that, of Church endowments, either two-thirds or at least half should go to the poor; in the case of the richer endowments two-thirds, in the poorer only half (Thomassinus, pars III, lib. iii, c. 31, § 5 (p. 569)).

³ "It is doubtful whether this arrangement [which gave one-third to the poor] was ever carried out in practice; in later generations [of the Middle Ages], at any rate, no trace of it is to be found." Ratzinger, *Armenpflege*, p. 152.

⁴ *Political History of England*, III, 152.

Middle Ages; indeed, we may say that this was one definite note of that rudimentary civilization; and it must be confessed that our more recent centuries have not been entirely free from the same reproach. Bromyard, quoting this ancient decree as to the partition of Church goods, adds: "But whatsoever [the clergy] may be bound to do *de jure*, they do in fact divide the goods of Christ and His poor as the wolf divides the prey; of which beast Isidore telleth that, whatsoever part of his prey he cannot or will not eat, he hideth it in the earth."¹ It was not only that the prescribed fraction was never regularly distributed, but that evil customs grew up which diverted from the real poor a great part of what was actually given. As early as the sixth century we find a document called *Matricula*; that is, a register on which the names of the poor are inscribed in each district. But, by a natural abuse, the dependents of influential churchmen or layfolk were allowed to intrude their own names; so that Archbishop Hincmar of Reims (about A.D. 750) was driven to decree a very significant prohibition.

Let [the parish priest] keep the names on his *matricula* in accordance with the quality of his parish; not oxherds or swineherds, but infirm and poor folk, and such as belong to the domain; unless perchance the priest himself have a brother or a kinsman who is infirm or in extreme poverty; let such be maintained from the tithes. But as for the rest of his kinsfolk, if he will have them near him, let him feed and clothe them from his own portion [of the parochial endowments].²

Elsewhere, he warns the priests not to sell those tithes which are due to the poor. Not long afterwards, we find the lower clergy sometimes obtaining inscription on the *matricula* for themselves. That abuse was not greater than others which have reigned in all ages or countries where business guarantees have been difficult; but it was typical of what we shall find throughout the history of medieval charity. Hincmar tells us of a count who erased the names of deserving poor from the *matricula*, and substituted others at his will. A few years later, Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons, complained of the unreasonable distri-

¹ *Sum. Praed.* O. vi, 15; cf. D. iv, 10, 11. In this connexion it may be as well to warn readers emphatically against the theories expounded in an unequal and frequently misleading paper in *Archaeologia*, LX, 391 ff.: "The Treasury of God and the Birthright of the Poor."

² Thomassinus, pars III, lib. iii, c. 31, § x (p. 571).

bution of charities. "Men flock to the churches", he writes (and *ecclesiae*, in medieval Latin, includes monasteries also), "and give all they can, to the detriment of better advice. For they would do better to give their goods to wayfarers and to the poor"; since actual endowments, he adds, too seldom bring relief to the truly indigent, and go too often to increase the comfort of those who are not strictly in want.¹

The medieval Church has often been praised for avoiding modern poor-law formalities, and for relieving the indigent by her constant insistence upon the duty of almsgiving. To the medieval poor themselves, this modern academic praise would have sounded like a bitter mockery.² The man who gave an example to popes by grappling seriously with the general problem, as he preceded them by many centuries in grappling with the revision of the Vulgate Bible text, was not an ecclesiastic but a layman, Charles the Great. In his character of *episcopus episcoporum*, he recognized here one of the most pressing needs of his time. His father Pippin had already decreed "let each man do his own almsgiving and feed his own poor". Charles confirmed this by extending the legal term *familia*, and with it the legal obligation for poor relief, from the narrower sense of "household" to the wider sense of "feudal dependents". When, therefore, Charles decreed "Let each man cause his *familia* to be maintained from his feudal estate [*beneficium*] and his proper *familia* from his own proper property", he did in fact create a poor law; and we have no evidence that this became less of a practical reality than any other of his laws, in those days of embryonic civilization. In unison with this, the Council of Tours decreed in 813 "Let every man study always to nourish and maintain his *familia* and such destitute folk as belong to him".³ But no popes, I believe, ever took in hand with equal seriousness this task of organizing relief throughout their dominions, apart from their efforts in their own capital or territory. Indeed, even in Rome the sums originally destined for poor relief were sometimes directed to augment the incomes of the

¹ Thomassinus, pars III, lib. iii, c. 31, § x (p. 571).

² I have noticed recently, in a Roman Catholic newspaper, a common-sense protest against the medieval idea that it is meritorious to give alms without enquiry into the beggar's actual condition.

³ Ratzinger, pp. 156-7.

clergy; so that, with the increase of the popes' power in Europe, we find an increase of suffering among the destitute in Rome itself. Ratzinger remarks:

It seems to me a striking fact that Gregory VII never attempted to restore the care for the destitute, and to ear-mark a part of clerical incomes for the poor. It looks as though he knew nothing of the Church's past in this field; otherwise it would be inexplicable that a mind like his should not have directed its reforming activity to this point also. . . . Although he strove with all his might for the restoration of community-life among the canons [of great churches], yet he paid no attention whatever to their duties towards the poor, which had been so strongly emphasized in the Council of Aachen in 817.¹

And Ratzinger goes on to show quite conclusively, I think, how this oblivion came about. In the evil times which followed upon the death of Charles the Great there was a general decay of European civilization, and charity organization decayed with the rest. Before the Revival of the Eleventh Century came, Latin Christendom had gone through a gradual change of mind in some important respects; and one of the causes of this change was the reception of the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals. This compilation, though not forged in Rome itself or with the direct object of increasing papal claims, did operate powerfully in that direction by the stress it laid on the pope's judicial powers. But it exerted its full force only some two centuries after its first composition. By that time many fresh attempts had been made to systematize Canon Law; and this collection of the False Decretals, in virtue of its unity of purpose and its unscrupulous concentration upon that purpose, offered a more orderly and apparently a richer apparatus of papal and conciliar decrees than any other; so that later compilers naturally took it for their basis. Dr Z. N. Brooke, in his recent Birkbeck Lectures, has shown how, for several generations after the Conquest, these forged documents were almost the only Canon Law known in England; and when, about A.D. 1140, the first volume of the *Corpus Juris Canonici* was compiled (*i.e.* the volume known now as Gratian's *Decretum*) this was practically founded upon the Pseudo-Isidorian collection.

¹ Ratzinger, p. 229.

To this commanding position, therefore, the False Decretals had gradually risen by the days of Gregory VII; and their influence proved decisive in the matter of charity. For, however often it may be urged that those Decretals introduced nothing absolutely new (and even that, I think, cannot be said without exaggeration), yet they unquestionably did consecrate and stereotype, for the whole of the Middle Ages and beyond, certain things which would otherwise have long remained highly disputable, and which might never, perhaps, have fought their own way through. We can see at once how much our present government in Egypt would gain if it could be believed that the Khalif of Islam had granted us, by undisputed constitutional right, in times of immemorial antiquity, all those points which we have claimed in theory and have executed in practice, during this half-century of our occupation. These False Decretals, then, when all deductions have been made, gave precisely a clear sanction of that kind. Even Marsilius and Ockham, in their boldest anti-papal arguments, never ventured to repudiate directly this work of a Frankist forger which for nearly six centuries had been accepted as a classic by popes and people. Thus the forgeries were in fact epoch-making; and on no point more clearly, perhaps, than in the meaning they gave to the phrase "Christ's Poor"—*pauperes Christi*.¹

During the first six centuries of Christianity, the consecrated phrase for Church endowments was "the Patrimony of the Poor"—*patrimonium pauperum*; and it was in that sense that the threefold or fourfold division had been devised. Devised, but, as we have seen, seldom carried out in practice; least of all, perhaps, during the tenth and early eleventh centuries. Then, with the general revival of civilization, came a very strong monastic revival; men gave to the monks, whether in life or at death, more generously perhaps than at any other time before or since. And men gave to them at first because they were in every sense *pauperes Christi*, and, to the minds of that time, Christ's in a very special sense. For the poor man always gave his prayers to his almsgiver; and here, in the cloister, were poor men whose prayers mounted more directly to God's throne than any others. So far the monk had a natural right to the patrimony

¹ Ratzinger, pp. 229 ff.

of the poor; but certain distortions and fabrications in the False Decretals tended to tilt the scale still more in his favour. In this book, as Ratzinger puts it, "it is no longer the destitute layfolk who share in church property, but only canons, monks and nuns who, having renounced their possessions, have become voluntarily poor and live now in cloistered communities".¹ The Carthusians adopted *pauperes Christi* as a quasi-official title, and the phrase is common in the charters of other Orders. When the *Abingdon Chronicle* records certain tithes as having been given *in eleemosynam pauperum*, the context seems to show that the beneficiaries were not the village poor but the monks, at any rate immediately (*R.S.* II, 34). At first, this was well enough; there was, perhaps, no better way of helping the indigent of our villages and towns than by endowing the monasteries. But, the richer these grew, the more truly may it be said that these *pauperes Christi* were tending to come between the Christ and the real poor. And that distortion of original ideals is nowhere so marked as in the appropriations of parish churches.

The salient facts are briefly but very clearly stated by Professor Watson in the sixth volume of the *Cambridge Medieval History* (Chapter XVI), and at far greater length in Dr Hartridge's *History of Vicarages in the Middle Ages*. In pagan times, the local lord had the right of building a temple, appointing a priest, and paying the officiant with tithes levied from the inhabitants. After the earliest missionary days, the same system was taken over in a Christianized form. The lord was the legal protector of the church, its *advocatus*; hence the modern term *advowson*. In the days of feudal tyranny, the parson, though spiritually *rector* in his own parish, was too often the vassal, almost the bondman, of the lord. In England, however, at least from the Conquest onwards, we cannot say that which has been said of Continental countries under feudal anarchy, that the squirearchy practically became owners of the majority of parochial endow-

¹ Ivo of Chartres writes [A.D. 1100]: "Although tithes and oblations are owed in the first place to those who do the clerical work—*clericali militiae*—yet the church may hold what it possessed in common with all the poor: how much more, then, with those poor who have left their own possessions, and, bearing Christ's Cross not by compulsion, are following after the poor Christ" (Migne, *P.L.* CLXII, col. 200).

ments.¹ The great canonist Hostiensis, in the thirteenth century, speaks of Spain, France, Burgundy and Germany as lands where, *ex generali consuetudine*, tithes were held by the laity.² The comparative immunity of England from this plague may perhaps be traced to the Conqueror's love of order, and to his far greater sovereign power than that of any other king of his time. Gregory VII, in one of his letters, praised William warmly for the vigour with which he had repressed the pillage of Church property and clerical marriages;³ and, though we know the second of these efforts to have been only partially successful, yet the evidence seems far more favourable for the first. Nor will this seem strange, if we consider the circumstances; for in that matter he had the parish clergy on his side, while they were set against him in the other. Peter of Blois, writing in about 1200, seems to draw a clear distinction between English conditions and those in France, where (as he says) "the knights usurp the right of taking tithes; and, not deferring to our [clerical] privileges, they extort them from us by force".⁴ In Wales, again, Giraldus tells us that the nobles were accustomed to rob the parishes of their tithes; and Dr Hartridge is probably right in surmising that this continued until Edward I's conquest brought order into Wales as into some other fields.⁵

In those circumstances, we need not wonder that pious folk gave parochial tithes to the monasteries. A significant charter comes from a Breton collection, just before A.D. 1100. A lady rehearses how her bishop, and many others, had told her it was forbidden in Canon Law, under pain of excommunication, for a layman to possess a church even by ancestral right; "therefore, since I would rather save my soul than commit it to the everlasting torments of hell, I have granted the aforesaid church in perpetuity to the monks of St-Aubin, on condition that they make monks of my two sons Evan and Daniel, and that they provide for me until my death". The bishop was to receive a gold piece yearly from the church in recognition of his assent to

¹ *Rev. Hist.* LXVII, 14, where Imbart is writing of the seventh century.

² *Summa Aurea* (Venice, 1570), p. 285, cols. 2, 3.

³ Migne, *P.L.* CXLVIII, col. 610 (lib. IX, ep. 5).

⁴ Epist. 82. See comments in Thomassinus, pars III, lib. i, c. 77, § 19 (p. 41).

⁵ *Loc. cit.* p. 87.

this transaction; and the priest who did the actual duty was to have one-third of the income.¹

Layfolk, however, were not always so spiritually minded and economically disinterested in their transference of parochial incomes to the monasteries. In [1089] the chancellor of Pope Urban II wrote to the abbot of Molesme: "In times past, secular princes have been permitted to grant even churches unto monasteries; but they have used this licence too freely, so as even to sell churches to monasteries. Pope Gregory VII strictly forbade this; by reason of which prohibition the bishops began busily to despoil the monasteries [of the tithes thus acquired]." ² In that Breton case, the apportionment of one third of the parish revenues to the priest who did all the duty is interesting as an instance of the way in which the husk of a custom will survive even after the kernel has disappeared.

In the earlier days of monasticism, the possession of a church seems to have meant no more than the right of presentation. But soon these possessors took natural advantage of their situation to exact a *quid pro quo* from the presentee. At a very early date, therefore, we find these churches paying a pension to the monks, perhaps something like a tenth or a twentieth of the income. But things gradually went further than this. In 919, the king of France granted to Cluny that "they might hold and possess their churches with all the tithes thereof, even as they had acquired them through papal privileges and episcopal charters". ³ As early as 852, and again in 922, conciliar decrees in Germany show the monks taking full possession of the church revenues and doing the duty themselves. The hierarchy at first encouraged this, on the ground that it formed a useful counter-balance to the general concubinage among the parish clergy, and to the usurpation of churches by layfolk. ⁴ But such competition with the parish clergy had never been part of the Benedictine ideal; and experience showed it to have two serious drawbacks;

¹ A. de la Borderie, *Recueil d'actes inédits de Rennes* (1888), p. 65. Earlier endowment deeds, on the Continent, often speak of the remorse of conscience which impels the lay donors thus to restore tithes to ecclesiastical uses (e.g. Wyard, p. 431, A.D. 1178). For general usurpation of tithes by powerful layfolk under the feudal system, see Schreiber, I, 272 and note.

² Hardouin, *Concilia* (1714), vi, col. 1688.

³ Thomassinus, pars III, lib. ii, c. 21 (p. 332).

⁴ *Loc. cit.* pars I, lib. iii, c. 22 (p. 697).

first, it was inimical to claustral silence, and secondly these monastic parsons became recalcitrant to episcopal control. Therefore Calixtus II, in the Lateran Council of 1122, forbade the system; and though in Germany and other countries there were frequent exceptions, in England this prohibition was generally respected; although the canonist Ayton, in his commentary on the papal prohibition as repeated in the English *Constitutions of Othobon*, would grant very wide powers of dispensation to the bishops.¹ Moreover, the popes themselves, in later centuries, granted frequent "faculties" to English Religious for serving as parish priests.² This was not only when the parish church belonged to the monastery; as when, in 1358, we find that four Whalley Cistercians in succession have had indults to serve the parish church of Whalley.³ Yet the reasons against this were as strong as those which impelled popes and synods so often to forbid the dwelling of a single Religious by himself in any dependent cell or grange. *Vae soli*, as disciplinarians insisted: such solitude in the midst of "the world" was perilous to the soul.

Therefore the reformed Orders were at first most unwilling to expose their brethren to a life which was always inconsistent with the letter of St Benedict's Rule (Chapter LXVI) and generally with the spirit also.⁴ The Order of Grammont refused at first to deal with parish churches, for the express reason that it involved (in the mind of St Stephen, the founder) a robbery of the poor.⁵ The monks of Molesme, and their spiritual children the early Cistercians, saw this abuse very clearly; they declined to accept endowments from tithes because "they said that the Holy

¹ *Lyndwood* (1679), Appendix, p. 146.

² Details will be given in a later chapter.

³ *C.P.L.* III, 598. Mr Egerton Beck has gleaned from the episcopal registers all the English cases he could find (*Dublin Review*, April 1923); cf. Hartridge, pp. 167 ff., 175 ff.

⁴ Cistercian General Chapter prohibitions in 1234 (Martène, *Thesaurus*, IV, 1358). But in 1432 the Benedictines allowed the significant exception, which goes far to abandon the main principle, "unless the parishes be annexed to the abbeys" (Trithemius, *Opera*, p. 1043. Again, the *Consuetudines* of the Cistercian abbey of Szczyrzyc in Poland [1460] contemplate the custom as fairly common (*Studien und Mittheilungen* (1904), p. 619). Compare Benedict XII's regulation in Wilkins, *Concilia*, II, 609 (c. 26). In 1458 the Cluniac General Chapter excommunicated all brethren who acted as parish priests without special licence (*Bibliotheca Cluniacensis*, p. 1613).

⁵ Migne, *P.L.* CCIV, cols. 1078, 1141.

Fathers had divided tithes for distribution into four parts; and in this computation they found no mention of monks".¹ Yet, two generations after its foundation, in 1145, the abbey had already got possession of 15 churches and chapels.² Again, as early as 1196, Clairvaux defied the definite prohibition of the *Carta Caritatis*, and acquired the church of Bologne. In 1221 a further step was taken; the monks actually bought the tithes of a parish.³ Yet there were some who held out a good deal longer. Here, for instance, is a panegyric on a Cistercian abbot of [1250]. In spite of temptingly rich parishes within his grasp,

Yet he could never be induced to hand them over to his own monks to rule and administrate, since he judged that a monk outside his cloister would easily slide back into the vices of the world, even under an honourable tonsure and a specious face, when there was no holier power at hand to control and to admonish him of the duties of his office. He felt that, under such administrations, there lurked a certain subtle covetousness, whose snares, tenacious as bird-lime, could scarce ever be eluded and escaped, even by piety intent on promoting the salvation of others. For first the love of money creeps in, and soon he finds pleasure in richer feasts; then he prefers to celebrate divine service where the sacrifice is assisted by the alms of pious folk; until at last covetousness has almost changed into cruelty, and men reckon the year to have been unfavourable if it has not been signalised by many funerals of the richest folk.⁴

The Dominican (and afterwards Carthusian) Ludolph of Saxony, whose *Life of Christ* contains so many reflexions on contemporary society, wrote [1330]: "Thus, even to-day, many Religious who have the cure of souls flee from the cloister as from a prison, and like Satan, going round about the earth and walking through it, they run about as vagrants, caring little that their wandering feet will some day be bound and they will be cast into outer darkness."⁵ A century later, the Dominican Johann Nider [1430] counted the appropriation system among the 16 causes of monastic decay. In some cases, he says, *apud quosdam*,

on account of this system it is either almost impossible to reform the monks or, if they are reformed, it is difficult for them to persevere in

¹ *Cartulaire de Molesme*, I, 117 n. 4. ² *Ibid.* p. 131. See Appendix.

³ D'Arbois, p. 295. See also in Appendix.

⁴ Jongelinus, lib. VII, p. 58.

⁵ *Vita Christi*, pars I, c. lxviii, § 28 (Antwerp, 1618, p. 300).

good. For it is beyond doubt that the salvation of souls might be much furthered by Religious in parishes; but when a single monk, or even a monk with one companion, dwells long outside his own monastery, as must be if he has a cure of souls, then he easily grows pleased with the freedom from the monastery; then he shrinks from the brethren's community-life in cloister, and he must often spend his time with the female sex and be entangled in temporal affairs.¹ Hence follow disobedience to superiors, neglect of the commands of the Rule, and danger to chastity; moreover, the vice of covetousness is kindled. Therefore it was a prudent counsel of the first fathers of the Dominican Order, who in their statutes forbade the acceptance of any place which had a cure of souls annexed; and the same policy (as I hear) is followed unanimously by the many reformed monasteries of Canons Regular in Germany. Moreover I have heard from a trustworthy informant that a certain abbot of another Order, in our own time, finding that his monastery was rector of many parish churches, cut to pieces with a knife all the letters or bulls relating thereunto; and, when men murmured against this, he replied: "I would rather lose churches than good monks; for there are very many secular folk who will be able to provide for Christ's sheep." We see that St Gregory [I] was of the same mind, when he wrote to Castorius bishop of Rimini "we altogether forbid the saying of public Masses in a monastery, lest any occasion be given for the people to come together in the recesses and cells of the servants of God; for that is not expedient to their souls".²

Canons Regular, who of course were members of the monastic army, did indeed often serve the churches they possessed, by episcopal permission, and the Premonstratensian Canons practically claimed the right of doing so without permission; though they seem never to have produced documents to prove their claim.³ But the records of the English Premonstratensians give clear indications of dangers in parish cures, and plainer evidence comes from countries where monastic discipline was laxer than with us. The visitation of Lausanne diocese in 1416-17 shows some very bad cases;⁴ and here is one from that of Worms

¹ In Germany, it was frequent for the monks to save money by sending their own brethren to parish work, in spite of the general prohibition of this custom.

² This was incorporated in Canon Law: Gratian, *Decretum*, pars II, c. xviii, q. 2, c. 6.

³ Hartridge, *loc. cit.*

⁴ *Soc. Hist. Suisse Romande, Mém. Doc. série II, vol. XI (1927).*

diocese in 1496.¹ The visitors report to the bishop concerning the important town of Kaiserslautern:

The parochial church is also the church of the Premonstratensian monastery here... The Town Council called me to the Rathaus and expounded to me the indecent life of the monks; every night they haunt the taverns and brothels; moreover, at one time they violate one man's wife or another's maidservant and, alas! they boast in such crimes and rejoice when they have done ill and exult in their abominations. Wherefore they [the townsfolk] would fain that these monks were secular priests, and implore your lordship to find some means for uniting, by the Pope's authority, Euckenbach and this monastery of Kaiserslautern, so that a college [of priests] might be founded in the city.² The same opinion was expressed to me in private, I believe without the Council's knowledge, by the town clerk, Hans v. Flersheim, Esquire, who urged upon me that I should communicate it to your lordship.

Again, in 1576, the protonotary Bartolommeo Portia, nuncio in Switzerland, reported to Rome that many parishes were served by apostate monks

who, when they have obtained leave from their abbots or priors to live outside the cloister and exercise the cure of souls—a petition which is easily granted, either because this licence seems to purge the monastery, or for reasons of parsimony, since [their absence] increases the comforts and luxury of those who remain—then they are admitted in these dioceses just as if they had regular dispensations [to exercise such parish cures].

“It is notorious” (he adds) “what incurable wounds these men have inflicted on the Catholic religion.”³

¹ *Zeitschrift f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins* (1875), XXVII, 316.

² *I.e.* to disendow these two convents in favour of a new secular foundation.

³ *Nuntiaturberichte*, pp. 87, 101.

CHAPTER X

CHURCHES APPROPRIATED

BUT, already, before Pope Calixtus's prohibition, the monks themselves had begun to discover another way of utilizing their churches, the way of *appropriation*. This, and not the comparatively modern word *impropriation*, was regularly used in the Middle Ages to describe a system by which the monks took the whole benefice to themselves, subject only to the duty of providing a mercenary priest. The monastery thus became *rector* of the parish, and the duty was done by a *vicarius*, which was the regular term for a substitute in any walk of life. This practice seems to have begun earlier on the Continent than in England. Our first evidence comes from conciliar decrees. In 847 the Council of Mainz decreed: "Let none of the monks . . . presume to accept parishes of churches without the consent of the bishop: but for those titles in which they shall have been appointed let them make reasonable return to the bishop or his vicar, and when convoked, let them come to the synod." Similar decrees were repeated at Mainz in 852 and Coblenz in 922.¹ Later, we get definite concrete instances. In 974, we find the abbey of Moissac receiving from the bishop the "altars"—in other words, the spiritual revenues—of five neighbouring parishes.² Even earlier comes the case of Cluny. A charter of Louis IV, in 939, confirmed to that great abbey the possession of "its churches, with all their tithes, even as they have received them by privilege from Rome and by episcopal charters". This was followed by a bull of Agapetus II (948) implying the same in vaguer terms; this, again, was confirmed at a synod under St Peter Damian in 1063. Some sixty years later, these appropriations of churches formed one of the main points on which the new reformed Order of Cîteaux criticized the old reformed congregation of Cluny for conformity to worldly laxities. Peter the Venerable replied to

¹ Hartridge, pp. 9, 10.

² *AA.SS.OSB. Saec. v* (1685), p. 362. Cf. *ibid.* iv, ii, 58.

St Bernard in a long and memorable defence of his fellow-Cluniacs. He wrote:

You ask further, by what reason or authority we have been put into possession of parish churches, firstfruits and tithes, since these things, according to Canon Law, belong not to monks but to the clergy. As in other matters, so in this also, we claim the authority of the Catholic Church, by whose sanctions we assert ourselves to be in lawful possession of parish churches, and therefore of firstfruits and tithes. For if the Tribe of Levi had no inheritance among their brethren, in order that they might be rendered the more active in God's worship and in divine mysteries, and might not be called away therefrom by worldly impediments, and if on that account they were sustained by the firstfruits and tithes and oblations of other men, then it is right that this same grant should be made to monks, who, like the Tribe of Levi, are cut off from all heritage of worldly goods, and devote themselves by night and day to divine services. Who, indeed, may most justly receive the offerings of the faithful? Monks, who intercede assiduously for the sins of those who offer, or clerics who nowadays, as we see, strain every nerve in pursuit of temporal things, while they altogether neglect—*omnino postponunt*—spiritual things and such as pertain to the salvation of souls? Moreover, how should these men strive to save other men's souls, when they care not for their own? He will be a poor physician for others who availeth not to cure his own sickness; and, as the Lord saith, "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch". This we say, without forgetting the truth that the Church is saved through the work of clerics in divine mysteries, though she be little helped by the prayers of certain among the clergy. Seeing therefore that monks do for the most part watch over the salvation of the faithful, albeit they do not administer the sacraments, we hold that they may rightly receive firstfruits and tithes and offerings, and benefices of all kinds, since they cause priests and clerics to perform the other offices that Christian folk need.¹ But, in saying this, we by no means desire to exclude the clergy from possession of churches and ecclesiastical goods; only we prove, by these reasons and authorities, that monks may lawfully obtain all these things. For if they [the clergy] would fain live upon ecclesiastical revenues in return for the duty of baptism and penance and preaching and the other sacraments which they supply to the people, wherefore should not monks enjoy church goods, and the offerings of the devout, in return for the prayers, the psalms, the tears, the alms and the manifold good works which they offer unto God for the salvation of the people?

¹ *I.e.* the monks help the population (1) by their own prayers, and (2) by maintaining vicars to take the parochial services.

He goes on to prove that such transferences to the monasteries are approved by Canon Law.¹

We have seen that Peter, while recognizing clearly that this monastic appropriation of tithes was mainly at the expense of the parish clergy, yet indicated that it was sometimes at the expense of layfolk who had come illegally into possession of these "spiritualities". This comes out clearly in a document of about the same date (1125), in which the Archbishop of Reims describes the parochial revenues of Tours-sur-Marne, part of which were not only in lay hands but "what is more shameful, were given as dowries to wives or to daughters". The archbishop warned these invaders that they would incur damnation unless they restored these ill-gotten gains; these, therefore, were granted "to the abbey of Cluny, which is as it were the one great beacon of the whole world, this church, together with its oblations and tithes and all other appurtenances, to be personally held by the aforesaid brethren". Therefore, when the present incumbent is dead,

the abbey of Cluny will receive, in perpetual right, its own property; (to wit, the *altare*² and the *personatus* with all its appurtenances,) and will thenceforward have free power to substitute whatsoever priest it may choose in that church [of Tours], provided that he be a fit person.

Again, in 1140, the Bishop of Troyes gave three more churches to Cluny:

after the death of [the present incumbents], these churches aforesaid shall become the property of the monks, so that they may have free power to choose fit priests for the said churches, whom they shall present to the Bishop of Troyes to receive from his hand the cure of souls; and the monks shall provide reasonably [*mensurate*] for these priests from the ecclesiastical benefices.³

We may see here, therefore, both sides of the question. Bernard and the early Cistercians were right in insisting that

¹ *Epp.* lib. 1, No. 28; *P.L.* CLXXXIX, col. 141. Cf. Marrier, *Bib. Cluniacensis*, cols. 265, 273, 511, [700, 702, 705]. On the other hand, Peter's contemporary, Theobald of Étampes, who was one of the earliest teachers at Oxford, argued from Canon Law that monks had no right whatever to appropriate parochial revenues (A. F. Leach, *Schools of Med. England*, p. 131).

² A word sometimes used for the whole spiritual revenues of a church.

³ *P.L.* CLXXXIX, cols. 1058-63.

this acceptance of parochial tithes and, with them, either direct or indirect responsibility for the parochial cure of souls, was quite foreign to the primitive Benedictine ideal, and might only too easily conflict with it. Peter, on the other hand, could justly contend that the tithes were only too often in worse hands than those of the monks, and were likely to remain there so long as there was no monastic appropriation. We shall be able to judge, as we trace the evolution of this system, how far it benefited Church or State in the long run. In England, I think, it has never been traced farther back than 1102, when the Council of Westminster enacted "that monks shall not accept churches without the bishop's consent, nor so rob the revenues of such churches as are given to them that the priests who serve them lack that which they need for themselves and for their churches".¹ This proves that the system was already widespread enough to call for serious legislation; but the earliest concrete examples quoted by Dr Hartridge date from 1125 onwards.² Two others, however, seem to deserve chronological precedence. As early as about 1120, Archbishop Thurstan of York gave two formal appropriation-deeds to the priory of Emmesey (later, Bolton). In the first case his words run:

We have received them [the brethren] by our episcopal authority as perpetual parson of this church.... We grant to the aforesaid brethren, for their own use—in *propriis usus*—all the revenues of the said church.

In the second, he pleads his duty, as a pious pastor of his flock, to scatter works of mercy in many directions;

but such an one ought most chiefly to extend a liberal hand towards the relief of the indigence of those who, for Christ's sake, have despised all other things and made themselves poor in order to win the prize of [eternal] life. Wherefore we, in commiseration of their poverty, [do hereby ratify the lay founders' gift of this church to the brethren], and grant it in perpetuity, by our episcopal authority, for their own use.³

¹ Hartridge, p. 19. The earliest stages of appropriation in England are excellently explained by Dr West in his monograph on St Benet of Holme (*Norfolk Record Soc.*, III, 253 ff.).

² *Ibid.* p. 26.

³ Dugdale-Caley, VI, 205; cf. Dr Frere in *Church Quart. Rev.* July 1913, p. 323.

There can be little doubt that this process had received a considerable impulse from Gregory VII's campaign against simoniacal appointments and against clerical marriage, which threatened to feudalize the Church and to make even the parish clergy, what the higher clergy had long since become, a sort of squirearchy or *Junkertum*. To give a church to a monastery often meant not so much the immediate impoverishment of the parish (the priests being such as they were) as its transference from a life-owner (who might be succeeded by someone less niggardly) to a corporation, whose conservatism would perpetuate the diversion of parochial revenues. Therefore landlords had a strong interest in benefiting their souls by handing over tithes which, in England at any rate, they had not been accustomed to enjoy themselves. Popes and bishops had no objection to the principle, while they themselves took a fee or a pension for the accommodation; and, lastly, the monks had every temptation not only to accept all offers, but even to forestall them by solicitation. In these circumstances, we cannot wonder that appropriations became extremely frequent. Hauck gives instances of wholesale annexations, in the German Empire, from a very early date. In 998 the monks of Pfäfers had 33 parish churches; and the neighbouring Schänis, in 1045, had 24. In the middle of the twelfth century, we know of six German abbeys which had between them at least 345 churches. As Hauck remarks, the whole sum of parishes thus swallowed up by the numerous monasteries of Germany must be reckoned by thousands.¹ Here again are a few other continental figures, from great monasteries but not from the very greatest. Bec became finally owner of 160 churches.² S. Michele della Chiusa, in Piedmont, possessed at the end of the eleventh century churches or priories, on both side of the Alps, to the number of 170. One of its priories was Chamonix, which it obtained in 1090 or 1091.³ St Mary at Dôle had 198 dependent churches and chapels, according to Hurter.⁴ St Prospero at Reggio, as early as 1137, possessed seven mother-churches, 28 chapels (most of which would have counted as parish churches in England), and two

¹ *K.-G. Deutsch*. iv, 55.

² C. H. D. Grimes, *The Story of Bec-Helluin*, p. 9.

³ Claretta, p. 377.

⁴ Vol. II, p. 144; but I cannot follow his reference.

hospitals.¹ Turning to England, we find that St Augustine's, Canterbury, had 38 churches, from 19 of which alone the monks drew £424 a year, their total income from all sources being £1214.² Pöschl gives startling statistics for his own Germany. "In 1324, the bishop of Paderborn appropriated 5 parsonages, at a single stroke, to the abbey of Marienmünster. Similar cases may frequently be found." "The See of Lübeck, in 1400, had a revenue in money of 1400 marks; more than 400 of these came to the episcopal *mensa* from appropriated churches." Again: "The economic existence of numerous cathedral and collegiate churches is, to a great extent, founded on this system."³

We have seen how, in England, restrictive legislation had begun already in 1102. Before the end of the century, appropriations had become very frequent, and further legislation was needed, especially since the monastic rectors were quite irresponsible at law, and were tempted not only to hire mercenary priests in the cheapest market but also to leave long vacancies, during which they could draw the entire parochial revenues to themselves.⁴ Therefore, in 1172 and again in 1179, Alexander III interfered to prevent the sweating of these vicars, and to ensure that they should have some security of tenure.⁵ Then, at the Lateran Council of 1215 (Canon 32), Innocent III set himself to "extirpate this vicious custom [of starving the actual officiants]...for, as we have learned for certain, there are some regions where the parish priests have for their sustentation only the fourth of a fourth, to wit, the sixteenth part of the tithes; whence it cometh that in those regions scarce any parish priest can be found who has even a scanty knowledge of letters—*qui vel modicam habeat peritiam litterarum*". Seven years later, Stephen Langton took up the matter at his Council of Oxford; vicars must have a stipend of at least five marks, "except perchance in those parts of Wales wherein, by reason of the poverty of the churches, vicars are content with a smaller

¹ Affarosi, I, 89; compare the fuller description in vol. II, p. 267.

² Thorne's *Chronicle*, cols. 1976, 2161 ff. The monks, claiming exemption from visitation, were indignant with the archbishop who demanded legal vouchers for these appropriations; *ibid.* col. 2039 (1329); cf. 2051.

³ *Archiv f. Kath. Kirchenrecht* (1928), CVIII, 28, 62.

⁴ Hartridge, p. 28. ⁵ Hardouin, *Concilia* (1644), XXVII, 580; cf. p. 601.

stipend".¹ About the same time, Giraldus Cambrensis gives corroborative evidence for Wales; all the Welsh monasteries, he says, prey shamelessly upon the parishes.² In 1254, Innocent IV sent a friar as legate to England, with definite instructions for reform. He wrote:

Certain English abbots and priors of divers orders both exempt and non-exempt, gaping after their own gain by unlawful means, procure the patronage of parish churches under guise of purchase or by other perverse contracts, and thus fear not to apply the said churches to their own uses, or to that of their members, sometimes with the assent of their Diocesan and sometimes at their own will, contrary to God and Canon Law. On the other hand, in cases where the monasteries have long had the appropriation of livings, certain unscrupulous folk are falsely using the pope's name to blackmail them and get a share of the profits.³

In 1268 the legate Othobon legislated at the Council of London against "some who...greedily swallow up all that comes to them from an appropriated church,...so that what was provided for alms is sucked into the thirst of greed, and turns to robbery".⁴ Exempt monks like the Cistercians, he implies, are the worst offenders in this matter. One of the devil's own greyhounds (writes Étienne de Bourbon in the thirteenth century) hunts after these "abbots and priors, knights and other great folk", who get churches into their hands and exploit the revenues to their own advantage.⁵ Bishop Cobham of Worcester wrote in 1322 to the Archdeacon of Worcester's official:

We receive constant complaints that in appropriated churches, and in others which have perpetual vicars, the portion assigned to the vicars is so small and mean that they cannot pay the ordinary dues, exercise hospitality, or fulfil other obligations. What is worse, others resort to the tables of religious houses and of other rectors, losing altogether the vicar's office and retaining only the name; and they have no home in which to lay their head. You are to make careful enquiry into these matters and give us the names of the churches in which they occur.⁶

¹ *Lyndwood*, p. 64.

² *Opera*, R.S. IV, 177; cf. pp. 195, 204-5.

³ Wadding, *Ann. Min. an.* 1254, § 43 (vol. III, 1732, p. 357).

⁴ *Lyndwood*, p. 64; he notes that this exception may also apply to some parts of England.

⁵ Bourbon, p. 233.

⁶ *Reg. Cobham*, p. 135.

Meanwhile, however, energetic prelates had begun here and there to act up to the Westminster decree, and turn the mere hireling priest into a beneficed (though more humbly beneficed) cleric. The most distinguished of these were two Bishops of Lincoln, Hugh of Wells and Grosseteste, both of whom Matthew Paris credits on that account with undue severity towards the monks. The records show that many of these Lincoln vicarages were worth only the bare five marks, while some were even less.¹ In 39 cases Bishop Hugh has recorded, for comparison, the proportion of the benefice which went to the vicar; it seems evident that his rule was what we shall find in other places; he tried to secure one-third of the total income to the priest or priests who were responsible for the actual work.² There seems no reason to believe that Lincoln was an exceptionally unfavourable diocese; rather the contrary.³ Therefore we must look upon these arrangements as typical of what went on throughout England, where the number of appropriated churches "eventually amounted to 3845 at a time when the whole of the livings were computed at 9284".⁴ A few details will help to the understanding of these figures. The *Taxatio* of Nicholas IV (1291) for Norwich, which was one of the richer dioceses, gives an average income of £19. 2s. 7d. for the 74 rectors, and £7. 3s. 7d. for the 77 vicars. The rectors' incomes are certainly underestimated in that taxation; but there is not the same reason to suspect so much concealment of income on the vicars' part; their stipend was often fixed by definite written agreement. We have already seen how, though the minimum for a priest, before the Black Death, was usually fixed at £3. 6s. 8d., yet the

¹ *Liber Antiquus Hugonis Wells*, ed. Gibbons and Perry (1888).

² The totals come to £343. 6s. 8d. and £123. 1s. 3d. respectively.

³ Taking the first twenty *ordinationes* in which the vicar's *portio congrua* is valued, we get the following results. (All are conventual appropriations.) 12 of the 20 are valued at 5 marks (£3. 6s. 8d.). Two are at 10 marks (£6. 13s. 4d.), but one of these has to support two priests (Lavington) and one two priests and a deacon (Grimsby). Two others are £5, three £3, one 4 marks (£2. 13s. 4d.). Total £75. 0s. 0d. for 22 priests and a deacon (*Rotuli Welles*, pp. 12-13).

⁴ Perry, *Introd.* p. ix. Ecton's *Thesaurus*, compiled about 1750, when little had been done to alter the medieval proportions, gives 3457 vicarages out of a total of 8723 benefices; i.e. 39.6 per cent. The *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas, in 1291, shows that the proportion was as yet only 18.7 per cent. (1514 vicarages out of 8085 churches: Hartridge, *loc. cit.* p. 79); but appropriations increased rapidly after that date.

registers do testify to a good many smaller incomes, £3 or even £2. 10s., at a time when a first-rate agricultural labourer would receive about £2. 8s. A great many vicars received no more than £3. 6s. 8d. or £4. After the Black Death, the theoretical minimum was raised to £4; again, in 1378, Archbishop Sudbury raised the parish priest's to £5. 6s. 8d.; and a statute of Henry V brought it up to £6. Yet even on the verge of the Reformation, and in Winchester, which was not one of the poorest dioceses, £4. 13s. 4d. "was a fairly common vicar's stipend".¹

It has always been noted that the richer a church, the more chance it stood of appropriation; therefore the monasteries and capitular bodies, by thus taking two-thirds of the income from every third parish church, were appropriating more than one-third of the total amount of English parochial endowments. And it must be remembered that the parishioners saw clearly from year to year, by ocular demonstration, whither men carried these two-thirds or more of their sheaves, their cattle, and their death-bed dues; they were painfully conscious of this diversion of endowments from original parochial purposes. It is only a few modern apologists who have attempted to minimize this; and for their apologies they produce no serious documentary evidence; indeed, they ignore what is commonly set forth by appropriators themselves in their petitions for licence to absorb a church. Professor Pöschl, whom nobody will accuse of a bias against his own Church, speaks here with no uncertain voice in his article on appropriations from the technical point of view of a canon lawyer.² He writes:

The particular aim of every appropriation is always some considerable economic subvention.

Therefore appropriation was, above everything else, an arrangement in economic law. There can certainly be no doubt as to its original object. This was clearly expressed not only in more general

¹ *Reg. Fox*, Surtees Soc. 1932, introd. p. 51. For the other details see R. A. R. Hartridge, ch. v and H. G. Richardson in *Roy. Hist. Soc. Trans.* VI (1912). Miss B. H. Putnam gives a comparison of the regulations of 1362 and 1378 (*Amer. Hist. Rev.* (1916), XXI, 21-2). In 1362 priests with small cures were to receive £4, with large, £4. 13s. 4d., without cure, £3. 6s. 8d. In 1378 the priest with cure was to have a minimum of £5. 6s. 8d., the chantry-priest, of £4. 13s. 4d.

² *Inkorporation u.s.w.* in *Archiv f. Kath. Kirchenrecht* (1928), CVIII, 28, 60, 69.

places, but almost in every special case; moreover, it transpires from every detail of organization and from all attendant circumstances. It aimed at *an economic strengthening of the favoured institution* (author's italics).

At the Council of Trent many bishops complained that "abbeys and other institutions were getting no profit, in the long run, from their appropriated churches, which was in contradiction with the original object of appropriation". Therefore Pius V fixed for the vicars a maximum of 100 crowns, and a minimum of 50. From this, Pöschl's conclusion is natural and inevitable: "Present-day practice is not favourable to appropriation. . . . The *Codex Juris Canonici* does not even mention the word. . . . In fact, appropriation was a product of an ancient period in economics, *i.e.* that of Feudalism" (p. 86).

Yet of that period it was a characteristic and ubiquitous product. Léopold Delisle, an archivist of immense learning and far from anti-clerical, writes of Normandy:

It was very rarely that the tithes were not [either by landowners or by clergy] diverted from their original destination. What was finally fixed as a general principle was that which in strictness could scarcely have been tolerated even as a rare exception: in 1172, the cardinals in conclave at Avranches declared that no man could prevent the priest who actually served a parish from receiving one-third of the tithes.¹ Therefore we need not be surprised to find two documents which seem to show that, in Flanders at least, there was strong feeling among good churchfolk that the tithes had better go to their own parishes than to the monasteries. In both cases, the Bishop of Tournai (1219-51) ratifies the appropriation of tithes to the Cistercian nuns of Zwyveke, but only under protest. First of all, he sent to the lady who wished to give the tithes,

Our own messenger, warning her, and striving as effectually as we could, to confer the said tithes upon those churches within whose parishes they were contained; but she could by no means be brought to this, as Our messenger has faithfully reported. But We have thought good to notify this unto you, lest you should think that We have omitted anything that might be to the purpose.

Then, at the last resort, he allowed the tithes to go to the nuns "rather than that they should remain in the hands of secular folk".²

¹ *Classe Agricole*, p. 98.

² *Zwyveke*, pp. 5, 76. The dates are 1223 and 1226.

We must, however, notice two points which should to some extent soften our criticism of the appropriators and of the hierarchy. In the first place, kings share the responsibility with popes and bishops. The Patent Rolls yield almost as much evidence here as the Papal Petitions and Letters; for a special royal licence was needed in each case, and a royal fee was exacted for the feudal dues which would be lost by the passing into mortmain of these parochial incomes.¹ Moreover, there was at least one important case in which royal power was exerted without any economic temptation on the king's side. In 1305 Edward I pressed the appropriation of a rich church to Worcester priory in honour of St Wulstan, for whom the king had special reverence. It would enable them, he pleaded, to add three monks to the monastery, and to keep a perpetual taper at St Wulstan's shrine. The bishop, Swinfield of Hereford, wrote a strong letter of protest.

We have lately received with reverence your Excellency's letter concerning the appropriation of the parish church of Lindridge in my diocese, whereupon depends the care of many Christian souls, to the prior and convent of Worcester cathedral. But an experience of nearly twenty-three years has taught me that these appropriations of parish churches are fraught with so many perils and losses both to the living and to the dead, especially in my diocese, wherein the greater number of the parish churches have already been appropriated, through the unreasonable importunity (it is said) of certain persons—so many, I say, that I cannot now rehearse them to your Excellency in this present letter. Since therefore these religious men are not now (God be thanked) in that case wherein Canon Law would justify the necessity of adding to their possessions in this manner aforesaid, nor do they greatly need such an appropriation to bear the burden concerning which you have lately written to us—especially since you have bestowed upon them so much assistance in many other matters, for the reverence of God and for your ancient love to St Wulstan—it would be no great matter for them to bear the said burden for God's sake and yours, without those many inconveniences and losses which would undoubtedly follow if the said appropriation were to be made.

He begs humbly, therefore, to be excused. Yet his resolution was gradually undermined by those same "unreasonable importunities"; and two years later he gave his consent. He

¹ See Appendix for a specimen licence.

rehearses, in canonical justification, that "the Church of Worcester, in these days particularly, is burdened with unavoidable charges for hospitality and good works". But it must be recorded in his honour that he seems to have refused the ordinary episcopal share of the spoils; there is no mention of this in the summary of his formal licence.¹

The second moderating consideration, though less obvious, deserves at least equally serious notice. Dr K. L. Wood-Legh, who has studied this question intensively, concludes that, in the case of a good many richer livings, the parishioners lost nothing by these monastic appropriations, even in England, where great folk comparatively seldom usurped the tithes. For (as she points out) kings habitually rewarded their own clerks or ministers by presenting them with fat benefices in their own gift, or by procuring their presentation to others; and we may fairly assume that the absentee royal clerk would exploit the parish at least as mercilessly as the monks did: that the vicar would not get more than his third, and possibly even less.² This consideration, however, would apply only to a fraction of the livings; for royal clerks were not so very numerous after all.

This appropriation system, which attracted the attention of popes and councils, was naturally criticized still more freely by the general public. We have seen how Giraldus Cambrensis reprobated it at the end of the twelfth century. Peter of Blois, at the same time, spoke of monks as "robbers of the poor" through the tithes which they took,³ and Guiot de Provins complained that they had reduced "a thousand churches" to ruins.⁴ A far more important witness is Bishop Grosseteste, who set himself to enumerate the twenty-four worst sores of Christendom, and summed up: "When parish churches are appropriated to Religious, then the perpetuation of these afore-mentioned evils is sealed".⁵ In 1282, Archbishop Pecham complained of a series of abuses which, for all his efforts, he was quite unable to

¹ *Liber Pensionum*, p. 37; *Reg. Swinfield*, p. 421.

² *Church Life in England*, pp. 139 ff.

³ Ep. 102, to the abbot of Reading.

⁴ Ch.-V. Langlois, *La Vie en France au M.A.* (1908), p. 54.

⁵ V. der Hardt, *Mag. Concil. Constant.* I, col. 1142. Cf. *Fasc. Ziz.* R.S. p. 381: "The venerable doctor, bishop of Lincoln, said in a sermon that the appropriation of churches, especially to women, is against God's ordaining."

extirpate; among these were "unlawful and unprofitable appropriations of churches".¹ In 1311 Bishop Guillaume Durand of Mende was invited to send a memorial of necessary reforms to the Ecumenical Council of Vienne; one of his complaints runs:

In many parish churches, and especially those that pertain to the presentation, collation or disposition of exempt Religious, there is a general default of vestments and sacerdotal garments, and of church ministers, and of books and chalices and other ecclesiastical ornaments.²

Again, at the Council of London in 1342, it was decreed that the monastic appropriators should be compelled by the bishop to give alms to the poor in their appropriated parishes, according to a proportion of the revenues which the bishop should calculate. As the question had long occupied Church synods, so at length the complaints of the laity made themselves heard in the councils of the realm. In 1391 the Commons represented to Richard II that, whereas churches had been endowed for the glory of God and the succour of the parishioners,

nevertheless the patrons of the said benefices, and specially Religious, ...do mischievously appropriate the said benefices throughout the kingdom, and beat dolorously to the ground the houses and buildings thereof, and carry all away, cruelly destroying and subtracting from the poor and needy those divine services, hospitality and other works of charity which were wont to be done in the said benefices.

It was answered: The king wills that henceforward a proper sum of money shall be yearly paid and distributed from the fruits and profits of the said churches by the appropriators and by their successors, to the poor parishioners of the said churches, and that the vicars also be well and properly endowed.³

Shortly after this followed an Act (15 Rich. II, cap. 6), to the same effect. But this was not enough; in 1400-1 we find the Commons presenting a fresh complaint: let all further appropriations of churches be now forbidden.⁴ In 1402 the Commons complain again: the statute of Richard II is not kept: "Many persons of Holy Church, not fearing God, have wholly appropriated divers great benefices of Holy Church to them-

¹ *Epp.* R.S. p. 480.

² *De Modo Generalis Concilii habendi*, pars III, tit. lviii (ed. 1671, p. 346; cf. p. 270).

³ *Rot. Parl.* III, 293 b.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 468 a.

selves and to their chapters, without appointing perpetual vicars, contrary to the form of the aforesaid statute", and have even suppressed vicarages in some places where these had already been ordained. The king answers that the statute of 15 Richard II must be kept; and this was embodied in a fresh statute (4 Hen. IV, c. 12). But next year we find the Commons again complaining that the statute is not kept, and praying for the voidance of all letters patent which contradict the statute; the king answers "let the statutes made on this point be kept and maintained" (*loc. cit.* III, 542 a). Once again, in 1432, Parliament rehearses the old grievances: the statute of 4 Henry IV is ill kept, since no penalty is prescribed for its violation. So that,

in many [*plusours*] parts of the kingdom, [the appropriators] by the insufficient endowment thereof, and for their own gain, have suffered the said vicarages to be unoccupied and void for many years; whereby, in many parishes of this kingdom, old men and women have died unconfessed or without other sacraments of Holy Church, and children have died unbaptized, and thereby many mischiefs and inconveniences have befallen from day to day, to the great dishonour of Holy Church.

They pray that, henceforward, in all cases where this scandal shall have been suffered to go on for six months, the said Religious or Churchmen may lose their privilege of appropriation, and be reduced to their original position as merely patrons of the church in question. But the answer was the common formula of polite evasion; "le Roy s'avisera"; Government had not the courage to employ so drastic a remedy (*loc. cit.* IV, 404 b).

What was spoken in Parliament was, naturally, only a reflexion of what men were saying to each other outside. Richard Ullerston was an Oxford D.D. who in 1408, under patronage of Hallam of Salisbury, one of the greatest of our bishops, wrote a memorial to the Ecumenical Council of Pisa. A chapter is devoted to "the anomalous appropriation of churches". He emphasizes that

by these appropriations parishioners are defrauded of good pastors and teaching, and of alms . . . and divine service is sensibly diminished. . . . The Church experiences this everywhere, and especially the English church. . . . This system (or, rather, disorder) plainly tends in no way to the edification of the Church, but to its destruction.

He pleads that not only a future limit should be set, but that Prelates, clerks, and other skilled men in kingdoms, should diligently examine into the motives of appropriations and, if they find the evidences insufficient (for instance that they are invalid, either because they suggest falsehood or suppress the truth which ought necessarily to be expressed in appropriations of this kind, or that they tended to the detriment of the Church). . . in all such cases the appropriation should simply be quashed.¹

From Ullerston we may pass on to Thomas Gascoigne, one of the most distinguished and pious of the medieval chancellors of Oxford. In 1432 he refused the chancellorship of York Cathedral because its income came from appropriated churches. In his best-known work, *Liber Veritatum*, he recurs constantly to this abuse.

"For in England, nowadays, the care of souls is perishing through appropriations of churches and the non-residence of parsons and prelates." "Many and innumerable are the souls which are damned eternally" through this system. "Good works are omitted and lost" in the parishes; and,

through the omission of such good things, it often comes to pass that many more folk go to hell in the parishes than are fed in the monasteries by such appropriations. In the monasteries themselves, through these appropriations, spiritual goods are often not increased, but rather superfluous or unnecessary ornaments, or gluttonous dishes, and vicious irregularities; and, if we destroyed the appropriations, the cause of these evils in many places would be destroyed. . . . From such men shall the Lord take away the goods which they misuse.²

Wyclif was Gascoigne's *bête noire*; the good Oxford chancellor is never tired of smiting the Lollards; yet on this particular subject he is as emphatic as his adversary, who writes of appropriations: "and thus algates be poor men robbed of worldly goods and ghostly help, and the fiend hath an entry to overcome helpless men [such] as be men of such parishes and others that assent thereto." In the same context, Wyclif undertakes to refute the "lewd skill" (*i.e.* foolish argument) that "if the pope approve this thing, then this thing must needs be true".³

¹ V. d. Hardt, *Mag. Constant. Concilium* (1700), I, col. 1140.

² *Loc. cit.* pp. 3, 70, 74, 106, 108ff., 195.

³ Wyclif, ed. Matthew, pp. 426-7; cf. H. B. Workman, *John Wyclif*, II, 95.

While our Commons and Ullerston and Gascoigne were pointing out so plainly that things could hardly be set right unless these appropriators were compelled to disgorge much of their prey, one of the greatest of medieval disciplinarians made the actual attempt. Cardinal Nicholas of Cues, as legate to a pope who was certainly above the average in honesty and determination, undertook the reformation of the German monasteries. He drew up detailed instructions for his visitors, in the eighth of which he commanded them to test the appropriations carefully, and, whenever they found that these had resulted not in an increase of divine service, but rather in "the more luxurious living and idleness of the cloisterers", then they were to restore the tithes to the parishes, as though no appropriation had ever taken place.¹ Yet, here again, reformers were powerless; it would have needed a pope of the calibre of Gregory VII to produce any real impression. Instead of that, the majority of popes had long taken, and still continued to take, their share in this spoliation of tithes. The pontiffs could not act thus, thinks Gascoigne, if they realized what they were doing. But, unluckily, they knew very well what they were doing; they had ambitious schemes which entailed enormous expenditure, and therefore, two generations after this cardinal legate's well-meant crusade, at the Diet of Nürnberg in 1524, we find the German nation complaining to the emperor. They rehearse how appropriators are frequently robbing the parishes so shamelessly "that the hired priests... cannot get therefrom a competent sustentation and a decent livelihood"; and therefore the priest, in turn, is compelled to rob his flock by illicit extortion of money for even the ordinary sacraments, such as baptism and confession.²

In the absence of real papal opposition or effective restraint, it was inevitable that this scramble for parish endowments should have gone on all through the later Middle Ages, and at an accelerated rate, except in so far as each year diminished the number of prizes to be scrambled for.

¹ J. M. Düx, *Nicolaus v. Cusa* (1847), II, 458.

² Browne, *Fasciculus*, I, 372, § 86.

CHAPTER XI

THE SCRAMBLE FOR TITHES

I ADVISEDLY used the phrase "scramble for tithes"; feeling that no milder words will express the plain facts. Let us now trace more systematically, what my preceding quotations will have suggested, the steady growth of this system for five centuries at least.

Perhaps the most instructive feature of this development is to be found in the steps by which these men, often truly religious and self-sacrificing in other ways, reconciled themselves to the absorption of parochial revenues. At first, of course, there might be a genuine conviction that the peasants' church was thus saved from a worse harpy, the Continental lord, who might absorb more than those two-thirds that monasteries ordinarily took. We see this clearly in the case of the Benedictine abbey of Morigny, whose twelfth-century chronicle was begun by Abbot Theulfus, and was published by Fr. Duchesne in the fourth volume of *Historiae Francorum Scriptores* (1641, pp. 359ff.). This monastery, according to almost universal custom, was partly endowed from tithes and other possessions which had once belonged to parish churches. The author (p. 372) records a scruple on this subject, so unusual that Mabillon has thought it worth reproducing in his *Annales*. The chronicler writes: "It grieved the conscience of our abbot and some of the brethren, that our predecessors had acquired certain churches and tithes not only by gift, but by purchase." Fortunately, however, the papal legate came to stay with them, accompanied by William, Bishop of Châlons, a prelate of unusual learning; these two reassured the monks. "Whatsoever ecclesiastical thing may be bought from the hands of layfolk", it was decided, "is not a *purchase*, but a *redemption*." This was the solution previously adopted by St Anselm (*Ep. lib. III*, 163).

The conscientious scruples of the early Cistercians did not last very long. After a century, in 1214, the General Chapter was still struggling against the system; but this was the last

effort; the Order was already joining in the general scramble; and, a century later still, Cistercians were not only swallowing up the churches but actually destroying the villages for their own agricultural profit. Pöschl notes that in Germany, and in the later Middle Ages, the greediest appropriators of churches among the Religious Orders were the Cistercians.¹ Again, one of the worst recorded cases of starvation of a vicar is that in which the Cistercians of Rewley (Oxford) were appropriators.² It would be difficult to find clearer evidence than this for the irresistibility of the economic temptation. Walter Map was evidently a personal enemy of the Cistercians; yet what he says about them on this score receives considerable corroboration by cold-blooded documents. He writes:

Because their rule does not allow them to govern parishioners, they proceed to raze villages and churches, turn out parishioners, and destroy the altars of God, not scrupling to sow crops or cast down and level everything before the ploughshare, so that if you looked on a place that you knew previously you could say, "and grass now grows where Troy town stood". As I say they make a solitude that they may be solitaries; and not being allowed to have parishioners of their own, they take leave to disperse those of others: the Rule says they must not keep them, therefore it bids destroy them!

Archbishop Pecham, again, is not an absolutely impartial witness, since, as a zealot for Franciscan poverty, he was always specially critical of this Order, which had founded itself originally on Benedictine poverty yet had (as it seemed to him) so heartlessly betrayed it. Writing to Edward I in 1284 in protest against the foundation of a new Cistercian house too near to others, he says: "For, though they be honourable folk [*prodes hommes*], if it please God, yet are they the hardest neighbours that prelates and parsons can have. For, wheresoever they set their foot, they destroy villages, take away tithes, and by their privileges they blunt all the power of the bishops."³

Where the strict Cistercians thus capitulated to the world, it is not to be expected that we should find the older Orders

¹ *Archiv f. Kath. Kirchenrecht* (1928), CVIII, 36.

² *Reg. Grandisson*, II, 1036; III, lxii (A.D. 1347). The parish was Wendon, of more than 12,000 acres, with two churches about 2½ miles apart.

³ *Reg. Ep. R.S.* II, 726. For further evidence, see my *Med. Village*, pp. 224, 423.

resisting. One saintly Benedictine abbot, Odo of Tournai, did indeed begin bravely in [1120]; but his more business-like prior induced him at last to appropriate parish churches "after the example of other religious abbots", and within a few years the abbey was exploiting twenty-six parishes.¹ The tide was irresistible, because it suited everybody except the poor—the folk who counted for next to nothing in the State, and for very little even in the parish. The church of the fifteenth century, as Professor Imbart de la Tour points out in his *Origines de la Réforme*, was unable to shake off these abuses because both king and pope countenanced them, each finding his own profit in the system. When Archbishop Pecham, in 1282, demanded to see the Abbot of Bury's muniments concerning his appropriated churches, the abbot refused and appealed to Rome.² The Calendars of Papal Petitions and Letters are full of permissions granted for appropriations. Sometimes, as we have seen, strict enquiry was made into suspicious cases; but, as a rule, the pope must have been forced to adopt the principle which we know he adopted in other cases, of granting the petition while laying upon the petitioner's conscience the burden of the truth of his allegations of fact.³ The king also got his share, under the Statute of Mortmain. Moreover, each step led logically one step farther. It seems certain that the process of appropriation, so far from slackening, went on rather at an accelerating rate for some time. What was already stigmatized in 1200 as a public scandal gave even more reason for complaint in 1400; for, as we might expect, the vices of such a system multiplied cumulatively, by action and reaction. In 1450, Gascoigne tells us how parishes, once appropriated, lost in value by mismanagement and non-residence; so that

such an appropriation of one church becomes the cause and occasion of appropriating another to the same monastery; because, as soon as one appropriated church begins to decrease from its former revenue, they labour forthwith to get another appropriation, on the plea of poverty [*praetendentes paupertatem*], and thus "deep calleth to deep", and one appropriation provoketh another.⁴

Five generations earlier, Archbishop Pecham had noted this

¹ P.L. CLXXX, cols. 91 and 96.

² *Epp.* R.S. p. 307.

³ G. Pépin, *Serm. de Destruct. Neneve* (ed. 1527), xi, ff. 340-2.

⁴ *Loci e Lib. Ver.* p. 115.

within his own experience. He knew Lewes well, from his boyhood onwards, and he wrote:

Great is the fame of Lewes priory, and its possessions are said to be great; and in my days they are well known to have grown yet greater through appropriations of churches and by other ways; yet in the priory itself all honour and piety, and the needs of the convent, have been diminished, as is publicly reported.¹

At Durham, again, in 1372, the demand for a fresh appropriation provoked an enquiry into past history. It was found that the abbey had already swallowed thirteen parish churches and six smaller monasteries; yet the number of monks had decreased as the revenues had increased, and the fifty-six now remaining—less than one-third of earlier numbers—“when they go out, travel with three or four horses, and spend more on their food and clothing than befits men of Religion”.² For the appropriator’s thirst grew hydroptically; and it often suited the interests of great folk to favour fresh incorporations—popes, bishops, and lords who had inherited from their ancestors the “advocacy” of monasteries. On the other hand, few people had an interest in fighting the cause of the poor parson and his poorer parishioners. We even find the pope granting to the Bishop of Norwich “power to appropriate churches of his diocese, any constitutions or oaths taken by him to the contrary notwithstanding”.³ This was in 1348; but the Black Death seems to have had less direct influence on the system than might have been expected. The Calendars of Papal Letters and Petitions show thirty-nine fresh appropriations in the six years before 1348, and thirty-eight in the six years after. The Plague, it is true, is constantly pleaded as an excuse for appropriation, but seldom or never as the only excuse. The real causes lay far deeper, and were more steadily operative than even so great a calamity as the Black Death. Dr Hartridge has calculated that at least 100 fresh parishes were swallowed up in the six years between 1395 and 1400—the last years of Chaucer’s life.⁴ The fact is, that monasteries had come to look upon appropriation as one of the most profitable of all possible business transactions.

¹ *Epp.* R.S. p. 904, letter of 1285 to the Abbot of Cluny. This is corroborated by the visitation of 1279 printed by Duckett, *Charters and Records*, II, 143.

² *Cal. Pap. Let.* IV, 117; summarized by Snape, *loc. cit.* p. 148.

³ *Cal. Pap. Pet.* I, 142.

⁴ *Loc. cit.* p. 120.

We can trace this from an early date. The second prior of St-André at Bruges [1120] "considering that no exact observance of monastic discipline can long subsist without an ample provision of temporal goods, applied himself especially to satisfy the anxiety of his brethren on this point". His principal exploit in this field (continues the chronicler) was to persuade the Bishop of Tournai to permit the appropriation of "the church of Ghistelles, which possessed tithes and other revenues". Yet the chronicler, writing four centuries later, looks back to these monks of 1120 as models of charity to the poor, in comparison with those of his own day.¹ It never occurs to him that the poor parishioners also, in the twelfth century, might have found it difficult to retain their decency for long without sufficient provision of temporal goods. We may see how, in such circumstances, churches gradually came into the market almost as land or houses did. Not only does Gascoigne, for instance, complain of this traffic in parish incomes as a crying evil,² but we find the practice frequently recorded in the monks' own rolls and charters. The Bishop of Rochester, in 1334, was getting nearly £9 a year, or considerably more than a vicar's whole income, as his share for having allowed the appropriation of fourteen parishes; in 1508, again, we find another batch of fifteen yielding him more than £9.³ Gregory VII had, indeed, spoken of this sale of spiritual revenues long ago as "an evil common almost to the whole land", which must be put to an end;⁴ and the Synod of Poitiers, in 1078, decreed "that abbots and monks and canons should not buy churches which they have not [hitherto] possessed, except with the consent of the bishop in whose diocese these are".⁵ We have already seen (Chapter IX) how Urban II condemned the "sale of churches to monasteries". But the great Abbot of Evesham, Marleberge, learned beyond all other English abbots in Canon Law, records with pride his purchase of two parishes for his monastery.⁶ As they

¹ *St-André*, p. 32; cf. pp. 33, 37.

² *Lib. Verit.* pp. 5, 115, 222.

³ *Regist. Roffense*, pp. 135-6; cf. pp. 265, 433, 454, 617.

⁴ Van Espen, I, 808, § 25.

⁵ Mabillon, *Annales* (1740), v, 119.

⁶ *Chron. Evesh.* R.S. pp. 277, 300; other instances in H. Curtois, *Christ's Coll. Mag.* (1925), No. 105, pp. 59, 62; *C.P.L.* III, 276. Cf. Snape, p. 82, a papal enquiry into the cases of Religious who boast that they have bought churches (A.D. 1261).

bought, so they sold; in 1185 a great French abbey sold parishes even to Jewish creditors.¹ In [1270], the Abbot of Malmesbury bought two parishes, worth together £60 a year, for £277.² Bolton priory had to pay the king £50 for the appropriation of the rich living of Long Preston in 1304, with at least £12. 10s. more in law expenses, one of which would count in modern commercial morality as a bribe.³ In 1326, the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, bargained for the consent of the Bishop of Norwich to the appropriation of a church. He offered a pension to the bishop of 6s. 8d. a year, but let his agents know that, if necessary, they might go up to 10s. He finally concluded the bargain at 6s. 8d., *plus* a bonus of £13. 6s. 8d.⁴ In 1352, it was formally signified to the pope that

in the cathedral [of Salisbury] there are fifty-two vicars and fourteen choristers, whose portions are so small that they are not enough to live upon, wherefore the chapter, in order to increase the vicars' portion by $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a day each, and the choristers' together by 100s. a year, have bought the patronage of the church of Henney in the diocese of Salisbury, value £40. They therefore pray the pope to grant a faculty to the bishop to appropriate to the chapter the said church, in which there is of old a perpetual vicar, so that the augmentation as above described may be carried out.⁵

In [1450], Thomas Gascoigne relates how the Cistercians of Jervaux had bought a church worth £100 a year by bribing the lay patron with a yearly pension of £40; here, as usual, his facts are probably correct when we make allowance for his medieval exaggeration whenever he runs to round figures.⁶ At Malmesbury, in 1464, a final concord was made between the abbot and the Bishop of Sarum on three points.

Item, as to the appropriation of tithes, the lord bishop granted to the abbot one licence, such as the abbot with his council could best contrive and ordain; for which licence the abbot gave to the lord bishop twenty pounds, and forty shillings to Master Richard Wycheford for contriving the said licence and for drawing up a deed for the said licence.⁷

¹ A. Luchaire, *Social France, etc.* (1912), p. 232.

² *Reg. Malmesb.* R.S. 11, 358, 360, 366.

³ *Bolton*, p. 82. To the bishop's chancellor they paid 12s. 6d. "to gain his favour".

⁴ *Lit. Cant.* R.S. (1326), 1, 186-8.

⁵ *C.P.P.* 1, 235.

⁶ *Loci e Lib. Verit.* p. 5.

⁷ *Reg. Malmesb.* R.S. 11, 421.

On the Continent, tithes were often bought as an investment.¹

Thus the appropriation system created a regular traffic. The extent to which even outsiders profited by it may be read in the *Liber Pensionum* of the cathedral priory of Worcester (Worcs. Hist. Soc. 1925). The documents are mainly of the fourteenth century. The monks received yearly pensions from forty-four different parishes, amounting altogether to £36. 16s., on account of damages they sustained through appropriations by other monasteries (Gloucester, Tewkesbury, etc.), or "in gratitude for their help". Thus the spoils were divided among three parties—the appropriating monastery, the bishop, and the monks of the episcopal priory.

Moreover, it became more and more common for monks to farm out their tithes; they thus secured a steady revenue without the trouble or risk of collecting. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* supplies abundant evidence for the prevalence of this farming system at the Dissolution; and, for slightly earlier generations, the Chancery rolls. But it had begun long before this. As early as 1184 we find the Cistercians of Bonrepos farming out their church of Fen Drayton to the monks of Swavesey. The temptation was, of course, very great; it was difficult for distant French monks to collect their tithes from a Cambridgeshire parish. In 1229, Honorius III granted to St-Ouen-de-Rouen that they might "let and farm out their houses, *tithes*, mills and heritages to whomsoever they would" (Pommeraye, p. 273). A charter of 1273 shows that the tithes of the parish of Bleid, of which one-third were appropriated to the Cistercians of Orval, were regularly put up for sale (*Orval*, p. 481). Durham, as early as [1292], was selling its tithes for round lump sums; a practice which seems definitely to imply the middleman (*Durham Account Rolls*, pp. 490ff.; cf. p. 520. Pp. 72 and 687ff. show an extension of the system in the later centuries). In 1355, St Albans was farming out the tithes of its appropriated church of Sudbury (Badham, p. 11). Christ Church, Canterbury, was farming out one of its parishes in 1339 (*Lit. Cant.* II, 208) and again in 1362 (p. 422). St Augustine's, Tewkesbury, in 1351, was farming some of its tithes, selling others on the spot, and

¹ *E.g.* Van Lokeren, pt. I, pp. 94-6, 99, 127, 151, 157.

hiring a collector to exact them.¹ St Augustine's, Canterbury, in 1432, was farming out nine churches which brought in a clear income of £146, without any trouble of collection (*Excerpta*, p. 5). I need hardly pause here to point out the utter falsity of the epigram repeated even nowadays, that the monks could not be absentee landlords. In 1346 the abbey of St Augustine's, Canterbury, received papal licence "to let to farm their rents and appropriated churches as they shall see fit, any ordinances of the archbishop notwithstanding". In 1351 John of Sheppey, late Prior of Rochester, obtained a similar licence "that professed Religious may let to him at a yearly cess churches appropriated to them or their monasteries, and that he may receive the emoluments and profits of the said churches". Another individual licence was granted in the same year for a church appropriated to the Cistercians of Cleeve.² Here we have, obviously, a system which is already becoming a matter of routine, and will become more and more so. For instance, at Montier-la-Celle, at the end of the fifteenth century, "the tithes were usually put up to auction and sold to the highest bidder for one year only".³ Dr Saunders shows that Norwich Cathedral priory was doing this regularly from 1368 onwards (p. 63). At a later date, the State has to intervene; it is decided that, when the tithes are farmed out, and a suit arises between the farmer and a layman, the thing has ceased altogether to be a spiritual transaction, and the case must be heard not in the bishop's but in a lay court.⁴ Among the *Grievances of the German Nation*, in 1522, was the frequency with which churches were farmed out by appropriators who "care for nothing but how they may get an unfairly large rent from the farmers", with the result that the latter let the fabric go to ruins. And we may frequently find details which bear out these generalizations. The Hospitallers, especially, seem to have regularly farmed their churches in the later Middle Ages. Before the Dissolution, the Yorkshire houses seem to have fallen into the regular habit of farming out their rectorial tithes, nearly always to laymen. Numerous instances may be found in *Yorks. Records* (1931), LXXX. Bridlington was

¹ *Bristol and Gloucs. Arch. Soc.* (1933), LV, 251-4.

² *C.P.P.* I, 111, 217, 222; *C.P.L.* III, 224.

³ *Revue Mabillon* (1931), XXI.

⁴ R. Brooke, *La Graunde Abridgement*, 1573, f. 247 a.

thus farming at least sixteen of its churches at a price of about £5400 modern (pp. 7-9, 18-21, 32-4; for other cases see pp. 70, 72, 123, 136). It must be noted that here, as in nearly all the later cases quoted in my Appendix, the tithes are let to a layman; this was directly contrary to Canon Law, which strictly forbade the farming out of churches to laymen. The reason for this prohibition was obvious; a layman to whom the tithes were farmed was subject to exactly the temptations of the Roman *publicanus*, and the parishioners would be almost sure to suffer. Yet not only was this farming done here and there throughout Europe,¹ but in Scotland it seems to have become almost the regular system before the Reformation. For here, as elsewhere, the strict legal prohibition was constantly nullified, "for a consideration," by the very power which made and administered Church law. In 1430, the Benedictines of Winchcombe procured a papal indult permitting them to break the law in despite of any episcopal interference, and in 1434 Queen Catherine of England procured a similar indult for twenty-five of her chaplains at one stroke!²

What chance, then, had a handful of peasants, even in the improbable case that their squire might support them, against the united interests of pope, bishop, king, and a monastery able to pay enormous sums in a society where both civil and ecclesiastical courts were notoriously open to bribery? The list of bribes paid by Westminster Abbey in 1416, to different persons, for furthering one single appropriation, is only one specially striking example out of many which are on record.³ The case of Launceston priory illustrates both the helplessness of the parishioners and the temptation on the other side to unscrupulous use of their economic and social influence. In 1398 the priory procured papal licence to appropriate three more churches; let us note this date; for in 1391 a royal statute had attempted to correct the worst abuses, and in 1402 the Commons complained in Parliament that "many persons of Holy Church, not fearing God," have violated this statute. Launceston, then, in between those two dates, got papal licence for three more

¹ *Zwyveke*, p. 70.

² *C.P.L.* VIII, 383, 486. For Scotland, see my *Scottish Abbeys*, pp. 93 ff.

³ E. H. Pearce, *Monks of Westminster*, p. 135.

churches; then the pope cancelled his licence; then he allowed it again; then he again cancelled it; these fluctuations record the struggle between justice and injustice at an admittedly corrupt court, where the supreme judge was often at the mercy of false information. The parishioners, hearing that the priory was making another effort, and knowing how ill they could compete with these monastic capitalists at Rome, sent a petition to the king in Parliament.¹ The brethren of the priory, they write,

have lately suggested to our Lord the Pope that now is, saying that they would not bear the charges of the said priory without appropriation of the said vicarages. Upon which false suggestion our Lord the Pope, by his bulls apostolic, appropriated the said vicarages to the said priory, and thus they remained appropriated, until the said suggestion was found untrue before our very reverend Fathers in God the Archbishop of Canterbury and his bishops suffragan, in their Convocation of the Clergy recently held at St Paul's in London; seeing that the said prior and convent could spend £1000 a year, which is sufficient sustenance for 15 canons dwelling within the said priory.

They fear that their children may suffer from lack of baptism, their dead may be unburied, and hospitality may be destroyed within these three parishes. Dr Hartridge gives an almost exact parallel where the appropriators were the monks of Beaulieu in 1235. St Albans in 1395 procured a papal indult (though not for appropriation), on the shamelessly false plea that the abbey "is situate in the uttermost parts of the earth and is, in comparison with other monasteries of the realm, over-slenderly endowed".² Gascoigne (as we have seen) speaks of such false pleas as habitual.³

In the nature of the case there are few instances in which we can thus compare the appropriations and the inner economy of a monastery; but these show how easy it was to fill up monastic deficits by casting a fresh parish into the gulf, and how temporary such expedients were. In 1249, St-Trond was in heavy debt (to a great extent, as its own documents show, through mismanagement and even dishonesty on the part of certain

¹ *Rot. Parl.* III, 505 a; Hartridge, *loc. cit.* p. 224. For a similar false plea for appropriation see *C.P.L.* I, 375.

² *C.P.L.* IV, 293.

³ *Lib. Ver.* p. 115.

officials); they applied to the Archbishop of Cologne, who allowed them to appropriate another church.¹ In 1269, Glastonbury was in debt to the enormous amount of "about 10,000 marks"; and the monks were driven to very tortuous financial expedients; yet, very shortly afterwards, they applied the revenues of a parish to extra "pittances" in the refectory.² In 1300 the prior of Carlisle Cathedral monastery was found to have embezzled on a scandalous scale and to be negligent of discipline. After nearly five years, he was persuaded to resign with a pension of 20 marks—the equivalent of four statutory vicars' incomes—drawn from one of the appropriated churches.³ In 1303 the Benedictines of St Mary's, York, were allowed to appropriate one of their richest livings to fill the gulf created by "lack of proper governance".⁴ Moreover, the petitions themselves sometimes confess that the parochial revenues are being applied as a remedy to monastic waste. In 1363 it is pleaded to the pope that,

Whereas Mathama, Abbess of Langley, has spent much money in carrying on a suit for her abbey during 7 years, and has procured the union of the church of Dalby Parva, she prays for licence to apply the fruits of the said church to satisfy her creditors, who will not let her leave the place until they are paid.

The petition is endorsed: "Granted, if expenses were thus incurred."⁵ Here is another case (A.D. 1446). The pope writes that the Augustinian monastery of Launde finds its revenues, formerly amounting to 1000 marks sterling, so reduced, by reason of the bad management of its holders and of sinister events in those parts, that it has a debt of 500 marks, and its houses and granges in many places are threatened with ruin; yet that very great hospitality is observed therein daily, therefore they may appropriate another parish.⁶ Even so strict and pious a bishop as Grandisson, in 1351, allowed the monks of Tavistock to appropriate another church in remedy of debts which,

¹ Piot, *Cart. S. Trud.* i, 76.

² *Chronicle of Adam de Domesham*, ed. Hearne, II, 525, 528-9, 532, 612-14.

³ *Reg. Halton*, I, 119, 224 and xxxii. For fuller details on this and other cases quoted, see Appendix.

⁴ *Reg. Corbridge*, pp. 92, 96.

⁵ *C.P.P.* I, 419.

⁶ *C.P.L.* ix, 570.

confessedly, were in great part due to the mismanagement of two successive abbots.¹

Similar cases can be quoted from the Continent. In 1137 Limburg was allowed an appropriation on the plea that the monastery was "so ruined financially that it could scarcely arise again".² In 1308-19 three fresh parishes were appropriated to the abbey of Hornbach, which had been reduced to poverty partly by hospitality, partly by mismanagement. The statutes by which the abbot attempted to "reform" this convent in 1318 speak for themselves: I print extracts in my Appendix. München Gladbach was one of the richest abbeys in northern Germany. In 1352 it was allowed to absorb another rectory: one reason given by the Archbishop of Cologne is that the neighbouring counts and knights haunt the abbey with their wives and children, their kinsfolk and acquaintance [*cum equitatu et multitudine familie*]; they sit and drink together at the abbot's table, and his income is thereby so diminished that he is almost compelled to break up his household and leave the place. Malmedy-Stablo, again, was one of the great abbeys of all Europe. This is the record of its Abbot Heinrich v. Bolanden (1307-34) as summarized by a Roman Catholic historian thoroughly sympathetic to monasticism.³

Unfortunately, the chroniclers paint him in the worst colours, as a manslayer, usurer, and simoniac. He is described as living *en vrai chevalier* in that castle of Logne which he had recovered [for the abbey in 1308]. He cast his frock into the castle ditch and dressed in a coat of mail, in order to take part in the feuds which devastated the district of Liège; and he surrounded himself with a court of pages and jesters. In order to meet these expenses, he sold the silver vessels of Malmedy, and so depleted the revenues of this abbey (which the squire Hermann of Namedy had increased by the gift of all his ancestral estates, as we know from a charter of 1316), that the Archbishop of Cologne felt moved to save it from ruin by appropriating to it the church of Amblève [with its rich revenues].

Murbach, an abbey which had once been famous for its wealth, was in debt through mismanagement; Boniface IX granted it

¹ *Reg. Grandisson*, III, lxvii.

² F. X. Remling, *Urkundliche Gesch. d. ehemaligen Abteien u. Klöster in Rheinbayern* (Neustadt, 1836), I, 314.

³ *Eiflia Sacra*, II, 55.

four fresh appropriations in 1394.¹ Pfalzel was similarly relieved by the Archbishop of Trier in 1463.² In 1431, the Premonstratensians of Rodenkirchen were sunk low through their own quarrels and irregularities; the Bishop of Mainz tried to reform them but without much success. In 1438 the bishop and the pope allowed them to appropriate another church on the plea of poverty.³

In other cases, the reason given is not present, but past mismanagement; they are "burdened by the corrodies and pensions created by their predecessors", or "suffering from the neglect" of former generations.

Let us pause here to consider how far these facts, and others which I shall presently rehearse, can be reconciled with the theory under which papal and royal licences were obtained for appropriating churches. The preambles to deeds of appropriation plead that the monks are subject to unusually heavy claims for alms and hospitality, or that they have suffered heavily through fire, floods, war, pestilence, or some similar calamity. But it is usually stated also, and always implied, that the result will be a better maintenance of divine service or a more liberal provision for wayfarers and for the poor. These preambles, however, must no more be taken at their face value than other similar preambles. The foundation-deeds of medieval colleges and schools lay similar emphasis on the good that will accrue to the poor. This has often misled readers into supposing that our colleges were founded for the poor in the modern sense, a misinterpretation which has been exposed by A. F. Leach and by Hastings Rashdall.⁴ We have seen how Ivo of Chartres, about A.D. 1150, laid down the principle that the *pauperes Christi*, in the truest sense, are monks.⁵ It was in appeal to this principle that the legate Othobon, in 1268, while forbidding further appropriations in England, added, "unless the appropriator be oppressed by so manifest a burden of poverty, or there be some other lawful cause for rightly pronouncing such an appropriation not so much contrary to law as consonant to piety".⁶ It was

¹ Gatrio, I, 517.

² *Eiflia Sacra*, II, 314.

³ Remling, *Urk. Gesch. d. Abteien u. Klöster in Rheinbayern*, II, 124, 350. *Schools of Med. England*, pp. 206-7; *Univ. of Europe*, II, 655-64.

⁵ *Ep.* 192 (P.L. CLXII, col. 200).

⁶ Wilkins, *Concilia*, II, 10, § 22.

common form, therefore, for appropriations to be represented as a simple transference from one section of Christ's poor to another. But we have seen that distinguished contemporary churchmen declined to take these preambles at their face value; moreover, we are ourselves now behind the scenes, and can note more exactly how far the plea corresponded with the facts.

Matthew Paris records, among the laudable deeds of Abbot John I of St Albans (1195-1214), how he was able to boast: "I have charitably given the church of St Stephen in this town for the kitchen of this community, which I have always embraced in the bowels of spiritual love, and shall embrace so long as I live, and in death." Under his successor William (1214-35) "Richard de Marisco bishop of Durham gave us the church of Eggingham for the improvement of our beer." The next abbot, John II (1235-60), assigned the church of Norton "for the amelioration of our beer, and for giving provision for the guests beyond what the abbot was wont to distribute". The church of Hartborne was appropriated "for the increase of hospitality", that of St Michael at St Albans for the sacristy, that of Hexton for the Abbot's "anniversary", of which a good part naturally went to provide a feast for the monks on that day.¹ The tone in which a man of Matthew Paris's calibre tells the whole story lends verisimilitude to Giraldus's tale of a Norman abbot in Henry I's reign, who after long litigation got possession of a church worth 100 livres a year. He came home, flushed with his "victory", and received at dinner the congratulations of one of the brethren, who said: "Let us feast merrily and rejoice; for, through the prudence and skill of our abbot, we have gotten to ourselves a good church wherein we had no right whatsoever!"² Churches were appropriated for monks' food in general by the monasteries of St Benet at Hulme [1200]. For monastic pittances in especial, appropriations were made at Buckenham [1200], Tewkesbury (1221), Shrewsbury (1312).³ Henry Foliet was made Abbot of Gloucester in 1228; and his first recorded act is that

¹ *Gest. Abb. S. Albani*, R.S. II, 252, 320-2; Dugdale-Caley, III, 304 a, 308 b.

² *Opera*, R.S. IV, 195.

³ *St Benet's*, p. 64 (No. 109); Blomefield (1805), I, 372; *Reg. Honor. III* (Rome, 1888), I, 537 (No. 3292); *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1307-1313, p. 497; *Chronique du Bec*, p. 58.



ST BENET'S ABBEY
(J. S. Cotman)



"in 1231, he assigned twenty marks a year from the [revenues of the] church of Newport to supply the brethren with extra allowances of French wine".¹ Bishops had no more conscience here than abbots. When Bishop Baldock appropriated Ealing to the Chapter of St Paul's (1308) he provided that, in certain circumstances, a considerable part of the parish revenues should be assigned to the canons for a pittance.² A worse case was that of Beaulieu, where an appropriation had been obtained on the plea of needing money for hospitality. The pope afterwards revoked this, finding that the monks had a large income, with little or no hospitality to exercise, and that they neglected even these opportunities in order to "revel in the goods of the monastery".³

From Eynsham, again, similar details have survived. In 1296 the monks had newly appropriated the church of Charlbury; the abbot and monks agreed to devote £10 a year from the revenues of this parish to what the preamble of their document calls the honour of God, the sustentation of His servants, and the necessities of the poor and the wayfarers. Here, roughly, is the proportion in which these three good works were provided for: £5. 6s. 8d. went to wax lights before two altars; £2. 13s. 4d. as "portions"—*i.e.* pocket-money—to the monks; £1. 10s. to the kitchenier in order that he might "set before the abbot and convent, on my anniversary, three courses together with a liberal pittance", including wine. The cook can thus afford to devote his ordinary daily allowance to "courteously entertaining the abbot's serving-men who are not serfs". The sacristan is to have 1s., the [five] bellringers a penny each, and the 13 almshouse occupants 1d. each. Three quarters of corn [price about 18s.] are to be taken from the parish revenues to feed all the poor who come and ask for bread that day; 7s. 6d. is to be given in money to 90 poor parishioners of the appropriated parish and its neighbour, "without fraud," at the rate of 1d. each. Roughly, therefore, the spoils of this parish went thus: 50 per cent. to the monks' church; nearly 40 per cent. to the monks' creature-comforts, and

¹ *Hist. and Cart. Gloucs.* R.S. 1, 28.

² *Reg. Baldock*, p. 89.

³ R. H. Snape, *Eng. Monast. Finances*, p. 148. A similar false plea of poverty, though not in connexion with appropriations, may be found in F. Bonnard, *L'Abbaye de St-Victor* (1905), I, 333; cf. pp. 332, 348.

little more than 10 per cent. to the actual poor.¹ This would probably be found a fairly typical arrangement, if we could look behind all these appropriations. The case of Worcester is often quoted, where the monks pleaded the large demands for charity upon an abbey situated on so great a high-road, yet the surviving almoners' rolls show that, even in this department, only about two-fifths went to the poor.² At Evesham, about A.D. 1225, some at least of the appropriated tithes went to improve the monks' food.³ At Bury St Edmunds, Glastonbury, and Butley, churches were openly appropriated for the monks' own table; or even for their pocket-money, an indulgence which the Benedictine Rule forbids.

These practices were equally common abroad. In 1313 the whole revenues of a distant parish were devoted by Albert of Austria to afford the monks of Waldsassen two extra pittances per annum.⁴ At Cornelimünster, in 1414, a rich church was appropriated "to the abbot's table, . . . in order that the abbey might exercise better hospitality, by reason of its many losses of property, and because its relics [of the saints] were visited by many great folk".⁵ At Orval, several parochial tithes went for pittances; so also did one at Mondaye when there were only 16 monks in the house.⁶ Other Continental instances are Tournus, Aachen, and Limburg,⁷ and Bec-Hellouin (*Chron. Bec*, p. 58). There is abundant evidence to support Gascoigne's indignant plea, with only the usual discount for the strong language habitual to medieval moralists: this constant practice of appropriating churches, he says, "will result in the multi-

¹ *Eynsham Cartulary* (ed. H. E. Salter), I, 340. I have noticed only one case, although doubtless others could be found, in which a benefactor, presenting an abbey with the tithes of a parish, earmarked them entirely for alms to the poor; this was at Loos (Belgium) in 1225 (*De Rosny, Hist. Loos*, p. 33).

² *Worcs. Hist. Soc.* (1907), Introd. pp. xxviii ff. Mr R. H. Snape's conclusions are in agreement with this (*loc. cit.* pp. 112 ff.). Dr H. W. Saunders, who has been through a very large number of the Norwich rolls in manuscript, thinks that the figure of 10 per cent. is decidedly too high.

³ *Chron. Evesh.* R.S. p. 275; cf. p. 291.

⁴ Muggenthaler, p. 156.

⁵ *Eiflia Sacra*, I, 401. The abbey finances had been mismanaged, off and on, for a century and a half; see pp. 392 ff. Then had come losses through war, in which the villagers had suffered far more than the monks.

⁶ *Orval*, pp. 234, 245, 319, 587; *Mondaye*, p. 138; cf. *Lyre*, p. 205.

⁷ For details see Appendix.

plication of many servants and idle folk and of pomp and of dishes [at dinner and supper] and of gifts made to the great and rich of this world". Thus (he says) selfish men are tempted to say within themselves "we are poor and wretched folk; but if we choose to circumcise ourselves and cast off our worldly garments and a few worldly deeds, then, by entering the cloister, we shall have our will and our desires and shall be reputed and called servants of God, and shall get temporal goods to our desire from such men as believe that they are uplifted to heaven by what we do".¹

Again, quite apart from the use to which these tithes were put, we may ask ourselves why appropriations were licensed for reasons which cannot have pressed more hardly upon the monks than upon the contributory peasants. Here is one case:

1315-1321 were seven years of famine. The greatest dearth known in England prevailed everywhere; the people died for want of food. The writer of the *Annals of Sempringham* gave a brief account of it: "The summer was rainy, and there were great floods of water throughout England, and the wheat was destroyed, and the hay also, and there was great famine and great dearth of wheat through all the land... There was also great pestilence and mortality among the common people, and the dearth and mortality lasted for a year and more." On February 14, 1316, Edward granted "protection for one year for the men and servants whom the Prior of Bullington is sending to the church of Prestwold in Leicester, which he holds for his own use, to transport corn and victuals from the parsonage thereof to the priory for the sustenance of himself, and of the canons, nuns, and others dwelling therein."²

Even at their best, appropriations were very often made for causes which should have financed themselves. A parsonage was appropriated to the collegiate church of Carden on the ground that friars of all four Orders flocked thither in great multitudes on their journeys, and caused considerable expense.³ Here, again, are two cases neither more nor less invidious than the average. After the ravage of the Scottish wars, the bishop of Durham wrote to the pope for the appropriation of the church of Hemingborough, as though that parish had not suffered even

¹ *Lib. Ver.* pp. 72-3, 115.

² Rose Graham, *S. Gilbert of Sempringham*, p. 140.

³ Pöschl, p. 35.

more from the Scots than the monks had.¹ A few years later, in 1350, the beneficiaries were the monks of Worcester cathedral priory.² A fresh and valuable church was appropriated

in response to a petition from the Prior (John of Evesham), stating that the Cathedral, Bell Tower, and Priory buildings were in great disrepair, and that the rents were insufficient to maintain hospitality towards the crowd both of the nobility and the common people that kept flooding the Priory. The rights of the Priory also had lately to be defended at the cost of borrowed money, and there was a difficulty in getting in rents owing to the death of many tenants during the epidemic.

Why should these poor parishioners have to pay for the cathedral tower and the monks' buildings, or for the entertainment of nobles or the convent's law expenses? As to the epidemic, the village must have suffered more than the monastery.

When the Black Death and other pestilences or visitations of God are pleaded by the appropriators, we may feel that the parishioners could have pleaded how they themselves were in still greater need of help after these calamities. Yet this plea of pestilence became, as Dr Hartridge says, almost "common form". To cite a typical example; Pershore, in 1397, gets another living because the abbey is on a great road and has many claims for hospitality; it has suffered heavily by the deaths of tenants during successive pestilences; its buildings are "mostly collapsed or collapsing through tempests and age". Yet the plagues had struck tenants even more heavily than monks, and why should parish revenues be diverted in order to rebuild a distant abbey, already sufficiently endowed to keep its own buildings in repair? Yet this excuse of rebuilding was very common. Westminster, in 1297, appropriated two parishes to pay for a fire that had damaged the abbey; Guisborough three in 1299 for the same reason, and Westminster, again, three in 1325.³ At Worcester

¹ Raine, *Hist. Papers and Letters from Northern Registers*, R.S. (1347-8), p. 392. For full details on this case, see Snape, p. 148. The monks were reported to be living luxuriously: but this is irrelevant to the argument of my text.

² *Liber Pensionum*, p. 16. Two years later, Evesham got a fresh church on the plea of ruinous buildings, lawsuits, and the plague (p. 19).

³ Widmore, p. 80; *Rot. Parl.* 1, 54; *V.C.H. London*, p. 443. See further in Appendix.

'there are frequent references to the repairs which the monks had to make in their own buildings as justifying the appropriation to their uses of the revenues of parish churches'.¹ Again at Canterbury Cathedral, in 1397.² Abroad, the practice was still more common, if for no other reason than that the frequent wars led to much destruction of churches and monasteries: I give details in the Appendix. For Scotland, details will be found on p. 82 of *Scottish Abbeys*.

The question of monastic charities will be worked out in my next volume far more minutely; and the full evidence may perhaps show rather less unfavourable results.

¹ *Liber Albus* (Worcs. Hist. Soc. 1919), p. lv; cf. *C.P.P.* 1, 195 (Crophthorn).

² *C.P.L.* v, 10.

CHAPTER XII

AT THE EXPENSE OF THE POOR

IT must be said again, therefore; this tide of appropriations was irresistible, since at any moment a plausible excuse could be found in Canon Law or in monastic tradition, while the widest facilities were granted in the Papal, Royal, and Episcopal Courts. We have seen how, before the Dissolution, about one-third of the English rectories had been thus absorbed and made into vicarages; in the diocese of Norwich, perhaps the richest of all, there were 372 vicarages to 542 rectories.¹ The list of churches and chapels appropriated or blackmailed by the great abbey of St Mary's, York, fills two folio columns, and furnishes in itself an answer to those who would make the Black Death mainly responsible; for it was drawn up in 1344.² Taunton priory dwindled from 14 brethren in 1431 to 12 at the Dissolution; yet these possessed 13 appropriated churches and at least 8 chapelries.³ At Margam abbey the monks at the Dissolution were drawing £30. 13s. 4d. clear from their five appropriated churches; their total income was £181. 7s. 4d. net: therefore appropriations formed nearly 20 per cent. of their whole endowment; and these were Cistercians, whose Rule at first had forbidden appropriations.⁴ Moreover, there were pensions and other ways in which money was drawn from the parishes. And, when we consider in detail the attitude of the appropriators to their responsibilities, we are compelled to admit what a learned and very impartial student of monasticism has said concerning the one department with which he was at that moment concerned, viz. the fabric and upkeep of the appropriated churches: "The monks' attitude to their responsibilities was—and no practical archaeologist who knows the value of money will blame them—as cold and critical as that of their legal successor, the

¹ A. Jessopp, *Dioc. Hist. Norwich*, S.P.C.K., p. 145.

² Dugdale-Caley, III, 566-7.

³ Toulmin's *Taunton* (1822), pp. 85-6, 92-3.

⁴ W. de G. Birch, *Margam Abbey*, p. 359. In 1326 the proportion had been even greater; the monks were drawing £42. 13s. 10d. from their lands and £23 from their churches.

average lay rector of to-day.”¹ With rare exceptions, the appropriators treated their churches as would men who knew the value of money.

The treatment of vicars has already been mentioned; but we must here come back to the subject; for that gives a measure of the whole.²

Grosseteste, at the first Council of Lyon (1245), complained that vicars, in general, had scarcely the barest livelihood: “for, since Religious have taken to the appropriation of parish churches, these aforesaid evils have been established and perpetuated”.³ Cardinal Humbert de Romans, at the second Council of Lyon (1274), characterized the vicar of actual Church life as a man who “would do a vicar’s work at the cheapest price”.⁴ Jean Gerson said much the same in [1420].⁵ John of Ayton, the Cambridge canonist who wrote a little before the Black Death, tells us that some lawyers hold that the vicar must remember the Pauline maxim, and be content to get bare food and raiment.⁶ Archbishop Pecham, who from his boyhood had known the greatest Cluniac house in England, Lewes, wrote a letter of strong expostulation to the Abbot of Cluny. “My youth is past”, he writes, “and I have now reached old age; yet, when I search my memory carefully, I can scarce recollect one occasion, even to the present day, when the Prior of Lewes and his monastery have presented any man to the cure of souls with the sincerity which it requires.”⁷ Two writers have pointed out how the same dismal story is implied in the startling frequency with which vicars came and went in livings appropriated to St Albans.⁸ Definite examples, in fact, meet us everywhere. The Bishop of Truro points out how Pontefract made nearly £200 on its seven appropriations, even while it paid its vicars better than usual.⁹ Wymondham abbey, in the thirteenth century, received £115. 6s. 8d. a year from two of its livings, and paid the two

¹ Prof. A. Hamilton Thompson in *The Architect* for August 30, 1912.

² For fuller quotations see Appendix.

³ Browne, *Fasc.* II, 253-4.

⁴ Gerson, *Opera* (1606), IV, col. 439.

⁵ Mansi, *Concilia*, XXIV, col. 130.

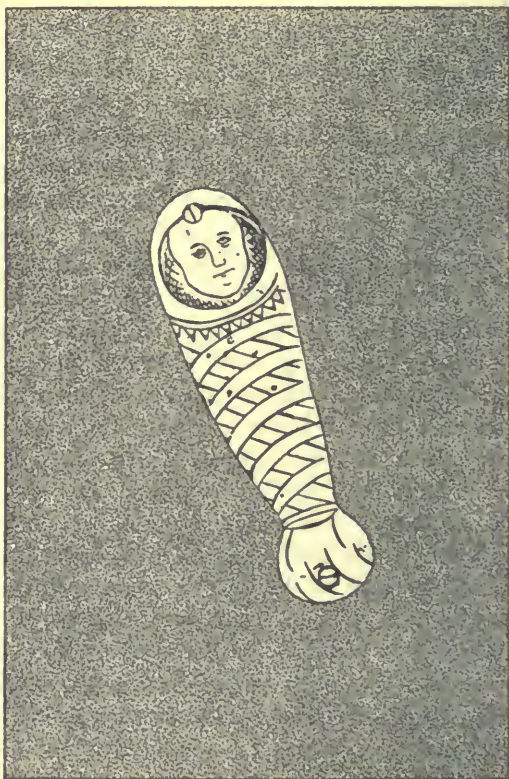
⁶ Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, Appendix, p. 121 a.

⁷ *Epp.* R.S. p. 903.

⁸ *Reg. Whethamstede*, R.S. II, xxxii; Snape, *Eng. Mon. Finance*, p. 77.

⁹ *Church Quart. Rev.* (1913), LXXVI, 327.

vicars only £12 in all. In the four other Norfolk monasteries from which statistics may be gleaned, £52 was received from the churches, and only £12 allowed to the four vicars.¹ At Savigny, the monks drew from the parishioners the price of



Memorial Brass to a Chrisom-Child in Lavenham Church. "Clopton D'Ewes, Esq., son and heir-apparent of Simonds D'Ewes, Knight", died 10 days after birth and 4 after baptism, in 1631.

120 cows per annum. The Archbishop of York, in 1344, was scandalized by what the monks of St Mary's exacted from their parishes. In the formal "ordinations" of vicarages, we sometimes find monks taking toll to themselves from the minutest

¹ For this and the following cases see details in Appendix.

items of vicarial profits, even down to the benediction-fees for pilgrims' wallets and the slender perquisite of the chrisom-cloth.¹ On the other hand, we sometimes find an exceptionally large and rich parish in which the vicar himself is very well paid. The monks of Furness, for instance, were giving 26 marks to their vicar at Dalton in 1423;² but this was very exceptional, though Bishop Frere points out that the stipend may "rise in rare cases to 50, 60, or 70 marks". In these richer cases, the vicarage itself might sometimes be appropriated; *e.g.* at the foundation of Wye collegiate church in 1449;³ or, again, a well-to-do vicar might get a papal indult to obtain other benefices which would imply partial, if not regular, non-residence, and the service of the parish by a curate.⁴

We have seen how bishops and synods worked for securing a living wage to the vicars; but their efforts were sometimes illegally frustrated. In 1352 there was a lawsuit between the monks of Arbroath and no less than 14 of their vicars, who, with the bishop's support, complained of insufficient endowment.⁵ The Hereford registers reveal that the abbots of Wigmore regularly compelled each presentee to a vicarage to sign a covenant "pledging him to the abbot and convent, under forfeit of a certain sum of money, that he would proceed by no other means against them in order to obtain any augmentation of the benefice which he obtains".⁶ That is, they contracted themselves out of the law. Gascoigne speaks of this as a frequent illegality, and blesses the memory of a particular bishop of Ely who fought against it in his own diocese (*loc. cit.* p. 133). The vicar of St Mary Magdalen, at Oxford, took a solemn oath in

¹ See Appendix. The chrisom-cloth was originally a linen band to retain the unction of holy oil on the child's forehead; then it became a complete swaddling-band. "In the event of the child's death within a month from baptism, it was used as a shroud; otherwise it, or its estimated value, was given as an offering at the mother's purification" (*O.E.D.*). Jeremy Taylor writes: "This day is mine and yours, but ye know not what shall be on the morrow; and every morning creeps out of a dark cloud, leaving behind it an ignorance and silence deep as midnight, and undiscerned as are the phantasms that make a chrisom-child to smile" (*Holy Dying*, I, § 2).

² T. West, *Antiquities of Furness*, p. 202.

³ *Lit. Cantuar.* R.S. III, 198.

⁴ *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 89; *C.P.L.* II, 271; x, 539.

⁵ *C.P.L.* I, 235.

⁶ *Reg. Spofford*, p. 65 (A.D. 1424): for other cases, see *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 79.

1323 that he would never ask for an increase of salary: this was fixed at 10 marks.¹ In 1448 the Archbishop of Canterbury had to give many warnings and finally to take legal proceedings in order to protect a vicar who was starving upon £4. 15s. 8d. in a Bermondsey abbey benefice.² We find the monks of Depyng (Lincs) even taking heriots from the vicars after their death, as if they had been bondmen of the monastery.³ A pathetic plea has come down from a vicar in 1465, who begs for some increase of salary from his rector, the monks of Canterbury Cathedral. He has (he says) scarcely 5 marks a year, and he has sometimes eked this out by singing two Masses a day, "which was against conscience", being indeed strictly forbidden in Canon Law.⁴ Even more pathetic, perhaps, is a document in the archives of St John's College, Cambridge (1272). Geoffrey, vicar of St Sepulchre's, buys for £5 a certain messuage in that parish; and he adds at the end:

Moreover, the said Geoffrey wishes to bring it to the notice of all who shall inspect the present charter that he hath bought the said tenement in Cambridge with a certain sum of money given unto him by his brother William for a certain tenement, land, and fishery which came by inheritance unto the said Geoffrey in the vill of [Aldreth?], and not with any portion of his aforesaid most beggarly vicarage—*et non ex aliqua predicte pauperrime vicarie sue porcione*.⁵

The church was appropriated to Barnwell priory. Indeed, the poverty of the lower clergy was proverbial throughout the Middle Ages; the mission-preacher Pépin [1520] is one of our latest witnesses.⁶ The result was natural; these starvelings too often lost general respect and even self-respect: Sir Thomas More confesses it. Grosseteste had great difficulties with a monk who not only proposed, but insisted upon, presenting an ignorant and utterly unfit priest to a living.⁷ A satirist of about 1340,

¹ *Cart. Oseney*, II, 239-46. The offerings alone, which must have been only a small proportion of the total income of the parish, were farmed out by the monastery in 1345 for 12 marks.

² *Reg. Roff.* p. 171.

³ *Dugdale-Caley*, IV, 168.

⁴ *Lit. Cantuar.* R.S. III, 240; for full text see Appendix. It is significant that this priest writes to the prior not in Latin, but in somewhat halting English.

⁵ St John's Muniment Room, drawer 20, no. 14, communicated to me by Mr H. P. W. Gatty.

⁶ *Sermones Dominicales*, f. 16 c.

⁷ *Epist.* R.S. p. 51. Compare *Lit. Cantuar.* II, 165, 169, for other cases.

though he does not expressly specify the monastic rectors here, denounces indignantly the effects of hiring in the cheapest market the priests to whom the actual parish work was committed:

And if the parsoun have a prest of a clene lyf,
 That be a god consailler to maiden and to wif,
 Shall comen a daffe and putte him out for a litel lasse, [less,
 That can noht a ferthing worth of God, unnethe
 singe a Masse [scarcely

But ill.

And thus shal al the parish for lac of lore spille.¹ [be spoiled

Therefore let us now look more closely into the fate of the parishioners whose tithes went mainly to a distant abbey, and who were dependent upon the ministrations of a starveling priest. Archbishop Pecham, in this above-quoted letter, complained of the neglect of almsgiving; and we may well begin with this fundamental question of poor relief. By Church law, as we have seen, one-quarter or even one-third of the tithes belonged to the poor; of that 25 (or 33) per cent. no cleric was a possessor, but only a trustee. A book has been published in this present generation, and is widely accepted as authoritative even among educated readers, which implies that the poor actually got their ideal quarter, in money or in kind, and which contrasts this supposed golden age with the state of post-Reformation England.² This thesis is supported by very strange misreadings and mistranslations. "It seems to us almost strange in these days", writes the author; and it would have seemed even stranger to real people in pre-Reformation England. For the author arrives at his result by quoting the ideals of the Canon Lawyers as facts, and even by misquoting those canonists themselves in their comments. When, for instance, Lyndwood says that the clergy "*ought to be better endowed*" in order to cope with the problem of poor relief, Cardinal Gasquet translates this as "*are well endowed*"; and he summarizes Lyndwood's main comment with equal inaccuracy. The fact is that Lyndwood was a

¹ T. Wright, *Political Songs*, Camden Soc. p. 328.

² Cardinal F. A. Gasquet, *Parish Life in Mediaeval England* (1906), pp. 7, 84-5. See full discussion in the Appendix, and in my *Ten Medieval Studies*, Appendix.

contemporary of Thomas Gascoigne, who is one of our most unexceptionable witnesses as to the losses of the parish poor through appropriations. Another slightly older contemporary was the Dominican Bromyard, who wrote in bitter satire concerning this theoretical third part for the poor:

However they ought to do by law, yet in fact they divide the goods of Christ, the Church, and the poor even as the wolf divideth his prey, of whom Isidore saith that, whatsoever he cannot or will not devour, he hideth it in the earth. So do these men hide in their chests and caskets and treasure-rooms, as though underground, whatsoever they consume not themselves, and should lawfully distribute among the poor and the lower clergy and the fabric of their church.¹

It was, indeed, the horror of robbing the poor village folk of their alms which St Stephen of Grammont expressly cited as a cause for his refusal of appropriated churches. Again, that small colony which founded the abbey of Fountains explained that it seceded from St Mary's at York because this, like other houses, had swallowed up the income of many parishes without making adequate provision for the poor.²

Here, again, the Canon Lawyers may help us. In Gratian's *Decretum* (pars I, dist. xlvii, c. 8) the question is asked: "Can the poor demand such superfluities as are detained by the avaricious and rich folk of this world?" The glossator answers: "No, not by any direct judgement; yet they can denounce to the Church him who giveth not; in which case the Church may compel him to give"; and he refers us for this to a decretal of Innocent III (*Decret. Greg.* lib. v, tit. iii, c. 42). When, however, we look up this decretal, we find that it is a plea, not for the poor in the modern sense, but for the clergy as *pauperes Christi*! It has become customary (writes the great pope) that certain fees should be paid by layfolk for certain ecclesiastical services; and a custom, when laudable, obtains the force of law; therefore let the bishop make enquiry and apply coercion to those heretically minded persons who violate such customs on the pretext that it is simony for the priest to demand money for purely spiritual services. We have here, in fact, a typical instance of the extent

¹ *Sum. Praed.*, O, vi, 16; cf. D, iv, 10, 11, and my *Medieval Village*, p. 299.

² Martène, *De Antiq. Mon. Ritibus* (1764), p. 310; *P.L.* cciv, cols. 1078, 1141; Dugdale-Caley, v, 294.

to which Canon Law could wrest even the plainest facts and interpret them in favour of the clergy. Let us pass on to John of Ayton. Have the poor (he asks) any power of action at law against their betters who refuse them a livelihood? They have no direct action, he decides, "but they may denounce them to the Church authorities who will compel them". How far this denunciation was likely to succeed we may gather from a previous sentence, where John has stated the right of the poor to their share of Church endowments as a theory apart from practice; he writes: "Tanquam bona ecclesiarum sint bona pauperum."¹ And his greater successor, Bishop Lyndwood, is even less optimistic.² He is commenting on Archbishop Stratford's decree, in 1342, that the appropriating monks must be compelled by the bishops to distribute a certain proportion of the parish revenues among the parish poor; and that, if they fail to do so, their revenues must be sequestered. Lyndwood asks, as a lawyer: If the bishop neglects to fix this certain proportion, can he be compelled to do so? The answer is, he cannot be compelled *praecise*, but he can *causative*. That logical distinction, after a long and involved explanation, we find amounting pretty nearly to this, that the parishioners, if they feel so inclined, may go to a great deal of trouble and expense, and having produced no visible result, may then tell the bishop, or hint behind his back, that he is not the man they took him for. On the other hand, supposing that we do induce our bishop to specify this proportion, and that the monks take no notice of his episcopal commands, then (pursues Lyndwood):

I ask whether this constitutes any ground for the poor to bring an action at law? It would seem not; for, seeing that the persons of these poor are uncertain, we cannot determine to which of them the obligation implies; and obligation is the mother of such a personal action as this. Yet my opinion is that, if in the parish there were a Gild of Poor Men, then these would be sufficiently determinate to have ground for action as a person.

He does not suggest that he knows of any such gild; nor has anybody, to my knowledge, ever discovered one. Still, if any such had existed, that would have been its legal position; and

¹ Lyndwood, *Provinciale* (Appendix), p. 127, on the plea that the church goods are the property of the poor.

² *Ibid.* (text), p. 134.

so the great Lyndwood wanders on for another dozen lines, but always to the same practical effect, that English law and Canon Law can here do nothing to enforce in deed what they have most clearly decreed in word. If Lyndwood had wished to produce a leading case, he might have quoted what had happened so recently as 1403. The Commons reminded the king in Parliament of the Statute of 1391, which enacted that, henceforward, whenever a bishop granted a licence for appropriation, he must "ordain, according to the value of such churches, a convenient sum of money to be paid . . . to the poor parishioners of the said churches". They represented to him that this Statute had been constantly violated; it was therefore re-enacted, under strict penalties, in 1402. Yet, the very next year, the Commons were forced again to complain of its non-observance; and the king simply answered: "Let the Statutes made on this point be kept and maintained." In 1432, a few months before Lyndwood completed his book, they had again complained to Henry VI, who had answered with the polite negative which the king regularly used in Parliament—*le Roy s'avisera*.¹ Dr Hartridge's experience coincides with mine; he writes: "Even if this Act [of 1402] had any temporary effect (which may be doubted) it certainly did not have lasting effect."² For instance, Edmund Lacy became Bishop of Exeter in 1420, and busied himself especially with ordinations of vicarages, many of which are printed in the second volume of his Register. Not one, I believe, contains any definite tariff of alms to be given by the appropriators, or any hint of a serious struggle to enforce Stratford's decree. The legal position of the parishioner seems, therefore, fairly plain. He had an ideal right to his 25 per cent. of the tithes; few matters were more definitely recognized by the Church, or had a longer tradition at their back. Yet nobody pretended that he could actually get anything like this proportion, or was ever likely to get it. If he had lived in a hypothetical world, in which certain gilds might exist (which did not now exist in fact and probably never would), then he might have taken his chance in the law courts. At present, he had no *locus standi* whatever in the Courts; his only champion was his

¹ In plain English, the question is shelved.

² *Loc. cit.* p. 199.

bishop. Yet even the most pious and pugnacious of bishops—even men like Grosseteste—had never fought to secure for the parish more than 33 per cent. of its real endowments, out of which the vicar had to be paid, with considerable additional expenses for church services and building and ornaments, before the question of alms to the poor could begin to be considered. If that had been so even in the golden thirteenth century, what wonder that here, in the fifteenth, though the king and Parliament had done everything to strengthen bishops' hands in their fight, the whole clergy seem so far from championing the destitute that they choose to ignore the statute rather than to take the measures therein prescribed for poor relief?

Dr Hartridge's study corroborates in far greater detail the conclusions on this point which I had printed some years ago in *The History Teachers' Miscellany*. He writes:

In the earlier centuries in England, there is practically no evidence of any kind as to distributions to the poor by the appropriators. The Bishops, even the best of them, seem to have made no organized attempt to secure the proper performance of this duty, and early vicarage ordination deeds are silent on the matter.... The laity, as represented by the Commons, tried to step in and interfere [in 1365].¹

Hence the Statute of 1391, the effect of which Dr Hartridge traces very early, from 1399 onwards. Yet, in the 12 cases where he has been able to discover the exact sums which the appropriators were bound to distribute in alms, these range from 1s. to 15s., they average only 7s. 1d. Yet the income of those twelve parishes averaged nearly £17 at least and probably a great deal more: the poor therefore had not one-third secured to them, but about one forty-eighth. And, if we look to the vicars alone, and assume that each got only his minimum wage, not even on that low scale was the immemorial law of almsgiving obeyed; the poor were not endowed with more than about one-tenth of the vicar's income. Indeed, in every case of which we have details, the bishop actually received a larger pension from the parish for graciously allowing the poor to be dispossessed, than the poor received by way of consolation for their disendowment. One case may be cited here in which the documents enable us to get a little behind the scenes. In 1456, the abbey of Merevale

¹ *Op. cit.* pp. 156ff. For some other concrete cases, see my Appendix.

was allowed to appropriate the church of Mancetter. This church was valued under Henry VIII at £45. 16s. 4d., and was probably more valuable in 1456. The pope, in confirming this appropriation, stipulated that the monks should give the vicar £10. 13s. 4d. a year, 13s. 4d. each to the Chapter of Lichfield, the Chapter of Coventry, and the Bishop of Lichfield: also 4s. 4d. to the Archdeacon of Coventry. Finally, he "imposes upon the abbot and convent the payment of 3s. 4d. in alms from the fruits, etc., of the said parish church to be distributed yearly at the discretion of the vicar and churchwardens, to its poor parishioners within a week after Lady Day". The monks thus kept £32. 15s. 4d. and gave £13. 1s., or less than one-third of the total. So far for the one parish of Mancetter; but they had three other churches, and tithes from a fifth. The total income from all these churches was just over £90. In strictest theory, therefore, the monks should have distributed £22. 10s. among the poor of those five churches or chapelries alone, beyond all that they gave at the monastery gate. Yet in fact we have their own account of their almsgiving just before the Dissolution.¹ They distributed yearly £6. 3s. 0d., which never had been their own, but was given to them simply as trustees for the poor, to be handed over to destitute folk on Maundy Thursday. Of voluntary alms they gave £5. 13s. 8d. more: and this, when we look into the matter, is all that can truly be credited to them. The 3s. 4d. was wrung from them by the pope; the £6. 3s. was simply a matter of common business honesty; they were trustees for that sum, paid from non-parochial sources for their trouble in distributing it. The whole that can be counted to them as real almsgiving is that £5. 13s. 8d. which does not amount to one-fifth of the sum which they had cleared from the absorption of one single parish, when all outgoings had been paid.

Dr K. L. Wood-Legh's careful analysis of many fourteenth-century documents may help us here.² She infers that, on the whole, the Statute of 1391, and particularly the clause requiring an annual distribution to the poor parishioners, seems to have

¹ Dugdale-Caley, v, 484.

² *Church Life in England during the Reign of Edward III* (C.U. Press, 1934), ch. v.

been treated seriously, at least by the laity. During the remaining years of the reign, royal licences were issued for the appropriation of seventy-eight benefices. In forty-five of these the distribution to the poor is mentioned, and in nine other cases, in which the appropriating Religious were to have the cure of souls of the parishioners, it was required that a fit sum of money should be distributed annually among the poor of the parishes. In two instances, special clauses granting exemption from compliance with the statute were obtained as a result of petitions presented in Parliament. The reasons which the Religious put forward in pleading for these exemptions were that, as the churches were of small value, the appropriators would have little or nothing left for themselves if they had to provide for a vicar and the poor. Exceptions of this kind, which show the system of appropriations in its worst aspect, would, of course, render the statute ineffective in some of the cases where its provisions were most needed, but the fact that it was thought necessary to secure exemptions from fulfilling its requirements is a strong indication that it was generally enforced. Moreover, in those cases where royal licence was given for the complete absorption of a vicarage, and the serving of that church by a member of the appropriating religious community, the precautions taken show anxiety on the part of the civil authorities to remind the Religious of their legal liabilities for maintenance of their own parochial poor.

Yet kings, like popes, too often withdrew with one hand whatever they had granted with the other. In 1392 Richard II permitted the appropriation of Woodhall by the abbey of Kirkstead, provided that "a competent sum of money" is given to the poor, "and that the vicar is sufficiently endowed". Yet, the very next year, we find:

Licence, with the assent of the Council in the present Parliament upon the petition therein of the abbot and convent of Kyrkestede for them to appropriate in mortmain the church of Wodehalle without paying ought to a vicar or the poor parishioners there, as required by the similar licence granted to them by letters patent dated 4 Feb. in the fifteenth year, the king being informed that their statement that they did this, nothing would be left for themselves, is true, as the church is of small value.¹

¹ C.P.R. 1391-6, pp. 23, 231. There is a similar case on p. 386, not monastic but collegiate.

There are some abbots, writes Bishop Alvarez Pelayo (1335), who put no perpetual vicars into their appropriated churches; or else, who "so burden their vicars that these cannot show hospitality".¹

Moreover, things seem to have grown not better, but distinctly worse as time went on. An archidiaconal visitation of Oxfordshire in 1520 covered 193 parishes. Neglect of parochial hospitality or almsgiving was reported from thirty-five parishes. The monastic churches stand out in bad pre-eminence; they numbered only 8.3 per cent. of the whole, yet in neglect of charity they came out at 37 per cent.—thirteen cases out of the thirty-five.²

The first church appropriated by any monastery was usually, in the nature of the case, the parish church of the town or village where it had been founded. This, as time went on, became more and more profitable; nor was the increment altogether unearned, since the parish generally owed much of its prosperity to the proximity of the great house, just as other parishes thrived under the shadow of a castle. But increase of population meant the birth of suburbs or outlying hamlets, each with its own spiritual needs; and here the monks showed themselves jealous masters. They often discouraged the foundation of chapelries, just as they resented the settlement of friars in their neighbourhood, on account of the diminution of fees which they feared for their parish church. They defended tooth-and-nail their legal monopoly of baptismal fees, burial fees, and mass offerings; thus, the spiritual problem which is always raised by any considerable shifting of the population was here seriously complicated by economic considerations. Thus, in a St-Trond charter of 1148 (Piot, I, 246) the abbot recites how

the poor folk of the village of Herpt besieged our predecessors and us with frequent and lamentable cries, complaining with truth that they lacked the service of God and all kinds of Christian consolation... children died sometimes unbaptized, the sick were unvisited, and the dying departed without the communion of our Lord's Body and Blood. Since therefore we were grievously afflicted for some years—*per aliquot annos*—by these miseries, we held counsel with our reeve Humbert and the seniors of the church, by the advice and assent of

¹ *De Planctu Ecclesiae*, f. 129 b.

² *Oxford Archaeol. Soc. Reports* (1925), No. 70. See Appendix to ch. XIII

the parson of Alburg, and we have permitted this church of Herpt to have a priest of its own, with the income which we have noted here below. A noble lady, Hildegund by name, in the presence and with the assent of Humbert our reeve, hath carefully conferred upon us and St Trond, for the good of her soul and of all her kinsfolk, three acres of land for the stipend of the aforesaid priest; the inhabitants of the village have given five acres and a half, with a free croft [for his house], and have added free participation in their rights of pasture, of woodland, of water and waterways. The parson of Alburg, whose vicar this priest will be, and through whom he will enter into his office, in consideration of the burden which will thus be removed from him, will grant him from his own income the altar-offerings and the gifts from live or dead parishioners [of Herpt]. . . These gifts of the faithful, made to St Trond in the days of our prelacy for the stipend of the vicar, who is put in by our own free will on account of the aforesaid necessities, we do [hereby] transfer [to him], except the tithes, which, as before, we keep in our own hand, to be received by our reeve and disposed for the prebend of our brethren.

The tithes, it need hardly be said, were by far the greater part of the parish revenues. It would be difficult to express more clearly than in this document the spiritual neglect which was possible for years under monastic régime, and the extent to which, when reform entailed expense, such expenses were met by outsiders. The monks might indeed encourage the work, though this was by no means always the case; but they seldom, if ever, made any considerable pecuniary sacrifice to meet the spiritual needs of these growing populations. Here is another striking instance. The abbey of St-Bavon possessed the whole island of Cadzand, and a document of 1167 shows that some of the land there, at least, had been reclaimed from the sea by other than monks. In 1231,

The *curé* who had ecclesiastical direction of the island of Cadzand did not live there; and very often bad weather prevented his landing, so that divine service thus suffered. The inhabitants addressed the abbot [of St-Bavon], praying him to be good enough to appoint a second *curé*. The abbot, although he took the tithes of the island, attempted to evade this just claim; but the Bishop of Tournai, Wautier de Marvis, succeeded in settling the difficulty. It was agreed that, without prejudice to the abbey's privileges, it should pay 8 *livres* to another priest appointed to the island, in addition to which 2 *livres* should be paid to him by the official *curé* and 5 by the parishioners; on these conditions, it was his duty to help the *curé* or to take his place in case of absence.

Yet the tithes were so rich that, in 1279, a lump sum of £1000 was paid for the purchase of only part of them (those of the reclaimed land) in perpetuity.¹ Dr Hartridge has printed several similar instances;² here are others for which I give fuller details partly in the *History Teachers' Miscellany* (June 1926, pp. 92 ff.) and partly in my Appendix. Redmile church was in the patronage of Belvoir priory. When, in 1238 or 1239, a Mary chapel was established at that church, with endowment for a chaplain, this was contributed not by the monks but by the lord of the manor and twenty-one other parishioners, the monks giving nothing but their consent. Shiplake, again, belonged to Missenden abbey. The parish was large, and needed an extra chapel about 1220; the endowment of this came not from the monks, but from a local knight whom the bishop persuaded to bear the cost. At Kirkby, again, there was a chapel-of-ease; but the parishioners had to pay most, if not all, of the chaplain's keep; if they ever fail here, then the monks of Elsham, who have appropriated the parish revenues, assert the right of letting the chapel down altogether and forcing the people to trudge to the parish church. Early in the fifteenth century, the people of St Nicholas at Lynn—at that time, perhaps, the richer half of the town—clubbed together first to procure a papal bull and then to rebuild their chapel, in the hope of procuring for it those sacramental rights which the monks were refusing; the result was one of the finest parish churches in Britain; but they never got those rights until 1627. "In 1449, Thomas Warter of Sewerby, Gentleman, bequeaths £10 towards the building of a chapel there, if the Prior and convent will consent to license it."³ As late as 1522, Archbishop Warham issued a mandate commanding the vicar of Darne, under pain of fine, to sing a few Masses yearly in the dependent chapelry of St Margaret, and to perform such necessary offices for the people as burials, baptisms, etc.; he recites at length the causes for this decree, and shows how many children must have died without baptism, how many child-bearing and ailing mothers must have suffered from the long tramp to the parish church, and what difficulties there had been

¹ Van Lokeren, pt. I, p. 96; pt. II, pp. 3, 7, 20. Professor H. Pirenne has pointed out to me that bishop Walter has an honourable place in Flemish history as "the organizer of parishes throughout the Flemish seaboard".

² *Op. cit.* p. 140.

³ *Yorks Arch. Soc. Proc.* (1872), p. 258.

with burial and extreme unction. Even so, the main costs of this reform at Darne were to be borne by the peasants of the hamlet. Yet the monks of Rochester were drawing £33 yearly for themselves from the manor and parish, and were leaving to the vicar only a balance of £9. 18s. 10d.¹ "It was the piety of private persons", writes an Italian historian of his own country, "which built and endowed the first chapels."² For Germany, the single abbey of Münster supplies four most significant instances. In 1428 the chapelry of Günspach complained that Masses were no longer being said in their chapel. In 1463 the peasants of Soultzeren built a chapel for themselves, and the monks simply took precautions that the abbey should lose nothing through this; so again in 1500 at Sundernach; in all these cases, the monks' concern is not for the Sacraments but for the money. In 1549 the abbot pleaded in the law courts "that, in pure condescension, his predecessors had allowed the folk of [the hamlet of] Mulbach to get their chapel served by a vicar, in order to spare the trouble of the journey in winter to Münster, but that the abbot had in no way professed to pledge himself to contribute anything for the maintenance of the vicar". The villagers, however, were now in rebellion, had seized the tithes of their hamlet and forbade further offerings; and the court condemned the abbot to give the vicar a decent sustenance.³ A French legal judgement, in 1230, laid down the principle that, where a new church was needed, the people must build it at

¹ Vouchers for the above cases will be found in the following places: *Rot. Hug. Welles*, I, 270, 276, and II, 310; I, xxv, 178; III, 57 (compare the case of Wymondham, where the magnificent western tower, rivalling that of Lavenham, was built by the parishioners at their own cost in 1410, and in the teeth of the monks, who shared the church with them (Dugdale-Caley, II, 329)); E. M. Beloe, *Our Borough, Our Churches* (Cambridge, 1899), pp. 140ff.; *Reg. Roff.* p. 277, cf. p. 274; *Val. Eccl.* I, 101, 116. The *Valor* does not distinguish between manor and church profits: but in 1291 the church brought in roughly one-third of the total, and the manor two-thirds (*Tax. Nich.* pp. 7, 8).

² Salvioli, p. 195. He quotes *Codex dipl. cavensis*, III, 429 (A.D. 900); *Codex dipl. calet.* II, 212, No. 104; *Lib. Diurnus*, 10-29.

³ Calmet, *Münster*, pp. 133, 140, 147, 157. Compare (Cameron, *Supplications*, p. 212) the petition of the parishioners of Clackmannan in 1420, pleading that the abbey of Cambuskenneth, though abundantly endowed in other ways, had appropriated their church and served it "by a temporal vicar, or, more truly, a hireling—*mercenarium*". They therefore beg that the appropriation be annulled, and "the cure of souls entrusted to their own rectory".

their own cost, and the monks were bound only to the upkeep.¹ Sometimes corresponding legal precautions were taken, not in favour of the monks but against them. Louis le Gros of France, in 1118, granted to the monks of St-Père the church and tithes of Liancourt, with "the offerings of tapers and bread, and the burial-fees of the inhabitants".² This and similar dispositions naturally led to friction with the parish clergy, to whom such fees would otherwise have come; accordingly we find a significant condition attached to another legacy. Payen, a canon of Chartres cathedral, left to the monks, for the good of his own and his four brothers' souls,

the church of Hanches... and a plot of ground whereon the monks may forthwith build a suitable house; but on this condition, that the monk deputed to that house shall visit no sick man's house until the parish priest have first visited him, except by the said priest's consent. But, after that the priest hath fulfilled his duty of visiting, then shall the monk be permitted to approach the sick man and to receive without contradiction whatever goods may be bestowed upon him.³

¹ Julien Havet, *Œuvres*, II, 187.

² *Cart. St-Père*, p. 638; cf. pp. 234, 242, cxxviii.

³ *Ibid.* p. 593.

CHAPTER XIII

SPIRITUAL NEGLECT

THIS emphasis upon the legal and commercial side led, only too often, to spiritual starvation of the people. *Baptism, burial, child-bearing women*, have already been specified in these last few citations, and we have seen how these matters were emphasized by Parliament in 1432; let us consider what this meant to the dweller in a chapelry or, sometimes, even in an appropriated parish.

The difficulty most severely felt was that of burials, the fees for which belonged to the rector (who, it will be remembered, might be a corporation such as a monastery) and were therefore denied to the chapelry.

In the Vale of Evesham, where the monks enjoyed all their churches exempt from episcopal interference, this exemption (writes Abbot Marleberge in about 1225) "was worth as much as the rest of the abbey [revenues]".¹ We may illustrate this by the case of neighbouring Pershore.² Here it was one of the monks' privileges that all the tenants from *thirty-five* parishes round must be buried either at Pershore or at Little Cumbrington. Then, after the mortuaries and the oblations had been duly paid, the bodies were taken back to their own churches or chapels for the funeral Mass, with the exception, in this matter, of five parishes. These privileges were so onerous to the parishioners that they had often been contested; but the monks had always been able to show definite proofs by charter, and had thus routed their adversaries "before divers judges, not only in ordinary but also delegated by the lord pope, and had freed themselves from molestation". The size of the district was here exceptional; but the insistence on monopoly was normal. At Pontoise, in 1226, a chapel-of-ease was erected and endowed beyond the little river; but the site was given by a layman, the stipend of the second priest, at any rate, was paid by the layfolk,

¹ *Chron. Evesh.* R.S. p. 140, cf. p. 188.

² Dugdale-Caley, II, 420 (A.D. 1280).

and the main care of the brethren of St-Martin seems to have been to secure the usual rectorial rights. Among these was that of burial offerings; the corpse must first come to the abbey church and the offerings be secured, before it might be removed to its home for interment. The difficulty of such double transport in wet weather, when the valley was flooded, led to quarrels and an arbitration in 1227, which very considerably reduced the claims of the abbey.¹ In 1301 the Archbishop of York was "horrified to hear" that dwellers in Hull were sometimes compelled to carry corpses for burial, through bad roads and floods, to the church of Hessle, which was appropriated to Guisborough.² Sherborne abbey had the monopoly of burials from fourteen parishes outside Sherborne, at distances varying from five to seven miles.³ The monks of Llanthony (Gloucs.) caused considerable tumult in 1391 by their legal enforcement of this right in one of their parishes.⁴ At Wimborne minster, in 1435, bodies were brought from a parish two miles off, with the result that "during floods, the said bodies are not buried within 4 days and more".⁵ At Lutry, near Lausanne, the episcopal visitors of 1453 report that the parish church, appropriated by the priory, has no funeral-cross of its own, but has to borrow that of the monks; and, "when any poor man dies, unless he have given something to the monks, and the said monks go in procession to fetch the corpse, he cannot have the aforesaid cross".⁶

The denial of baptismal rights, again, was very serious. Anybody, it is true, might baptize a dying infant in case of emergency, and the midwives were sometimes systematically taught the sacred formula, without which no baptism could be valid. But

¹ Depoin, p. 130.

² *Reg. Corbridge*, I, 161.

³ J. Hutchins, *Dorset*, 3rd ed. IV, 235.

⁴ *C.P.L.* IV, 371. See Appendix for full text of this and the next instance.

⁵ *C.P.L.* VIII, 505.

⁶ Transcript in the Vaud Archives at Lausanne, by H. Chastellain, pp. 171 ff. The cross would be used for procession at the funeral. So the chaplain of Langar refused to bury a corpse until he had received his mortuary (*Reg. Romeyn*, II, 276). The monks of St-Ouen at Rouen showed little generosity towards the parish church under the shadow of their abbey, from which they drew funeral-dues for every parishioner's burial (Pommeraye, pp. 394 ff.). For other instances where the monks exercised this antiparochial monopoly of sacraments, see Zaccaria, *Badia di Leno* (1767), pp. 141, 145, 150-1, 155-7, 161-2, 178, 183-5; *Ledger Book of Vale Royal* (Cistercian), p. 35; *Ramsey Cartulary*, R.S. I, 281, 341.

complaints of fatal ignorance are bitter and frequent; and here we must remember that fourth canto of Dante's *Inferno*, where the whole air trembles with the sighs of those who, merely for defect of baptism, live without hope and in eternal desire of heaven. Some Schoolmen, like St Thomas Aquinas, did indeed argue that this limbo might not exclude a sort of "natural" happiness; but their refinements of logic would not have been very easy for a bereaved mother to follow. Moreover, men of great authority, even down to Cardinal Noris in 1673 and the Dominican scholar De Rubeis in 1757, held that unbaptized infants are in actual physical pain, as did St Augustine and more than one popular preacher of the Middle Ages.¹ At München Gladbach, two at least of the appropriated churches suffered from the monks' refusal to permit baptisms in them.² Archbishop Pecham found serious fault with Rochester in 1283:

Moreover, there is another unbefitting thing which cannot by any means be tolerated, that the people of the city has no parochial church, except the cathedral itself; and this, when the priory gates are shut at night, is so completely closed that neither can fugitives take refuge there, nor sick folk get the *viaticum* or other ecclesiastical sacraments; not even in the daytime, as we are credibly informed, are matins ever sung to music for the people, nor even the [other] canonical hours.³

We have already seen how the abbey of St-Trond treated the chapelry of Herpt.

"It is notorious", wrote Thomas Gascoigne in [1450], "that many [*plures*] children die unbaptized because parish churches have not fonts, and divers abbeys have the licence and custom of compelling that all folk of certain parishes should be baptized within their monasteries, and yet they cannot at night, nor at other times, conveniently repair thither to the font."⁴

It was the neglect not only of this but of other sacraments or religious ministrations through the appropriation system which caused Gascoigne to give that terrible verdict which we shall see later in this chapter.

¹ I have treated this question fully in the sixteenth of my *Medieval Studies*, in which I print also the criticisms of Mr Britten, late Secretary of the Catholic Truth Society.

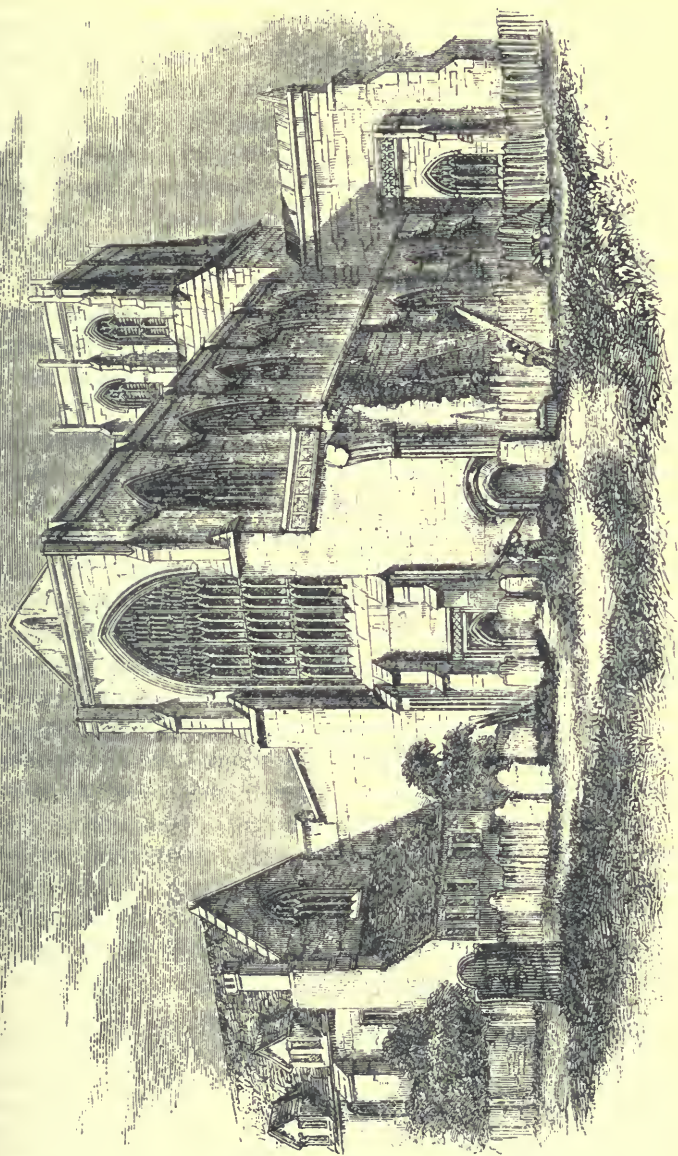
² See pp. 159, 167 of J. Stratner's monograph on this abbey.

³ *Epp.* R.S. p. 624; he found the same fault with Leominster, p. 586.

⁴ *Lib. Ver.* p. 197.

In communities which had risen to municipal importance, this question of baptismal fonts and other sacraments became very serious, and led to bitter quarrels. At Lynn, while the men of St Nicholas were ready to spend heavily on a new building, and a papal bull, and other litigation, the men and the priest of the priory church, St Margaret's, were almost equally determined in resistance; the pope had pleaded as an excuse for interference (since the monks' legal position was otherwise unassailable) that no small discord and seditions had already arisen, and further contests and homicide might arise. At Sherborne a similar denial did actually lead to something like civil war. The townsfolk could get their baptisms only in the abbey church, separated from the parish chapel of Allhallows by a door which the monks had recently narrowed; moreover, the font had been removed to an inconvenient place. Taking the law into their own hands, the townsfolk set up a font in their church; hence a quarrel in which the bishop had to arbitrate, after examining a hundred witnesses and taking legal advice (1436-7). His award was evaded by both parties; the quarrel burst out again; and then the monks induced "one Walter Gallor a stoute Bocher dwelling yn Sherborne" to enter Allhallows chapel, where he "defacid clene the Fontstone. Then the townsmen, aided by an Erle of Huntindune lying in those quarters" rose in "playnesedition. . . . A Preste of Alhalowes shot a shaft with fier into the Toppe of that Part of St Marye Chirch, that divided the Est part that the Monks usid from [that] the Townes-men usid; and, this Partition chauncing at that Tyme to be thakked yn, the Rofe was sette a fier and consequently al the hole [abbey] Chirch, the Lede and Belles melted, was defacid". This, of course, did the townsfolk no good; they were heavily fined and lost their font.¹ But a chance record from a visitation elsewhere shows very clearly how practical was this question whether a church should administer its own sacraments or be dependent upon a monastery. At Dienheim, appropriated to the Cistercians of Eberbach, in 1496, "the priest dwells in the abbot's court, and once there was a certain woman neglected in ecclesiastical sacraments at night-time; the sexton knocked at the door, but could not be heard for the distance and the barking of dogs; wherefore the neighbours beseech that you, our reverend

¹ W. B. Wildman, *Hist. Sherborne* (2nd ed. 1902), p. 23.



Sherborne Abbey Church. General view from the South West.

Father [bishop], may weigh the perils and compel the priest to the ordinary residence".¹ About the same time as at Lynn and Sherborne there was a long and very costly struggle at Abingdon between the monastery and a parish church, which also was decided in favour of the monks (1396). To these cases we may add a similar, though less acute, quarrel at Rochester in 1418.²

We have already seen cases where the church fabric itself fell into disrepair. The author of *Piers Plowman*, in that famous passage where he prophesies the Dissolution of the monasteries, speaks of monks "that have no ruth, though it rain on their altars".³ In 1524, again, one of the grievances formally laid before the emperor by the nobles at the Diet of Nürnberg was that churches were so farmed out by the appropriators that "the buildings were uncared for and fell into utter ruin".⁴ These complaints, apart from the rhetorical exaggerations, are supported by a mass of documentary evidence.⁵ Scattered references meet us everywhere; as, for instance, where Pecham, in 1280, found the chancel of Horton actually fallen down; in 1333 another chancel was too leaky to permit celebration of Mass; in 1426 the priory of Lewes was allowing four churches, which the monks had appropriated so recently as 1391, to fall into ruin.⁶ Payerne was one of the greatest abbeys in Switzerland; at the end of the Middle Ages its nave was being used to store corn, with those of two other churches in the same canton.⁷ Numerous instances of this may be cited from England and other countries. For instance: "An inquiry was made in 1345 as to the rights by which the canons of Nutley held so many churches *in proprios usus*, as they were found to be destitute of vicars;⁸ and it was noticed more than a century later that the churches belonging to this house were ruinous and badly served." Again, evidence for the neglect which appropriated churches might suffer will be found in Archbishop Corbridge's *Register*, I, 115-17.

¹ *Zeitsch. f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins* (1875), xxvii, 254; cf. p. 230 (Mörsch).

² *Reg. Roff.* pp. 560-70.

³ B, x, l. 313; cf. xv, l. 509.

⁴ E. Browne, *Fasciculus*, I, 360, § 23. ⁵ Cf. Hartridge, *op. cit.* pp. 147 ff.

⁶ Pecham, *Epp.* R.S. p. 130; Snape, *op. cit.* pp. 83, 88; another case in *Lit. Cant.* R.S. I, 344. The great abbey of San Michele della Chiusa, in Piedmont, was condemned in 1371 for a defective roof to its church, so that the rain fell upon its altar; in 1650 it "had been derelict for many years".

⁷ *Archives de la soc. d'hist. du canton de Fribourg* (1850), I, 173.

⁸ *V.C.H. Bucks*, I, 377; cf. *V.C.H. Kent*, II, 63, 71.

These are chance references, but we have cumulative evidence in the visitatorial reports. A visitation of Totnes archdeaconry in the year 1342 has survived by a fortunate chance.¹ There are reports on at least seventy-four churches, perhaps more; it is a question of division of paragraphs. Ten are practically faultless; fourteen have only very slight defects; the remaining fifty are seriously defective, sometimes very seriously. Among the twenty-two churches appropriated to monasteries, it is reported that rain actually falls on the altar in two, the chancel is ruinous in two more; the chancel roof is defective in two, and in one the chancel is both ruinous and defective in its roof. Thus seven, or nearly one-third, of the monastic parishes were on this black list, while the fifty-two non-appropriated parishes have only four black cases, or one in thirteen, and in none of these does the rain fall on the altar. The chancel service-books, which the appropriators were legally bound to supply, as they generally were to repair the chancels, are condemned by the visitors wholesale in ten monastic cases and severely in seven others; total, seventeen out of twenty-two churches. In the fifty-two non-monastic cases there are only six wholesale and fifteen severe condemnations; moreover, in three of these cases it is recorded that the books are being written to remedy the defect, a notice which we find in none of the monastic vicarages. Finally, estimates for repair are given in many cases, admittedly incomplete, but showing at least the minimum of expenditure which circumstances demanded. These total £211. 3s. 4d. for the twenty-two parishes, or an average of £9. 12s. (nearly) per parish; let us say £192 in modern values. Two of these parishes, it is true, were in 1342 held by royal presentees, as belonging to alien priories which the king had taken into his hands by reason of the war. But these were not the worst. One of the worst was appropriated to Tavistock abbey; I will not quote this, since it is so far exceptional that the abbot, of the noble family of Courtenay, was at that time wasting the abbey goods and defying the bishop.² Let us take the two last entries in the visitation, which are fairly typical; the scribe has here, as in a good many other cases, indicated the monastery only by an initial (p. 124):

¹ Printed fully in *E.H.R.* (1911), xxvi, 108ff.

² His career may be traced through the index to *Reg. Grandisson*; cf. Dugdale-Caley, II, 491.

"There is no Legendary; the Chancel windows are without glass; the reparation or provision of these defects pertains to the Abbot and Convent of C—— as rectors of the parish; they can scarcely be made good with five marks"—let us say, £130 modern. Again, "The Legendary *de tempore* is decayed [*corrosa*] and ill-bound; the Legendary for Saints' Days is insufficient and defective; the rector's psalter is lacking; the chancel is insufficient and dark; £20 will scarce repair these defects"—let us say £800 modern. "The vicarage buildings are vile and insufficient; they could scarce be repaired for £10." A visitation of Oxfordshire churches, 1520, gives very similar results.¹

We get similar evidence from the Continent. Abbé J. M. Alliot has published some French archidiaconal visitations in the diocese of Paris at irregular intervals from 1458 to 1470. He remarks in his preface: "Nothing can give us an idea of these fifteenth-century churches, transformed into storehouses for furniture or wine or corn, or into stables, in which men's eyes were shocked and their feet obstructed by the most different objects, and the most opposite to the decency of divine service." In three churches, at least, the archdeacon found corn being threshed, and in one of them (St-Yon) "there was also much corn, and the church was very full of unclean stuff [*immundiciis*], and it lacks the sacraments. Stephen Thieri, the prior's nephew, was fined by us for stacking corn there at the precept of his uncle the prior, without legal licence". At Buc, rain fell into the church, and Bondoufle was far worse; pigeons defiled the altar and built their nest in the reredos. But these last two were not in monastic patronage.²

Again, Lausanne diocese was probably the most civilized in Switzerland; it comprised cantons Vaud, Berne and Fribourg, with parts of Neuchâtel. An episcopal visitation of 1415 shows that 136 churches—almost exactly one-half—were appropriated to monasteries. In these, forty-four priests are reported as non-resident, forty as concubinary, and scarcely one of the churches but has some grave defect in building or in books or furniture. A later visitation, in 1453, is accessible only in different places; the reports for Vaud are in MS. among the Lausanne archives.

¹ *Oxford Archaeol. Soc. Reports* (1925), No. 70. See Appendix.

² *Josas*, pp. xxix, 119, 122, 185, 401. Skelton's satire, *Ware the Hauke*, describes hawking for pigeons in a parish church (ed. A. Dyce, I, 155 ff.).

Out of 166 churches and chapelries, seventy-six were appropriated to different monasteries. In fifty-four of these churches the service-books were insufficient; in thirty-eight cases the church roof needed repair (in eleven of them it is specified that rain came through); in thirty-seven cases the churchyard was unfenced or inadequately fenced, so that animals came in; and fourteen of these sacred buildings were used as storehouses for casks, corn, or in one case for artillery; so that the commissioners decree that thenceforth no profane things are to be stored in the consecrated building. In forty-one of these churches it is reported that the chancel is defaced; the officiants habitually extinguish tapers or torches by dashing them against the walls; henceforth they are strictly enjoined to buy a horn or some similar extinguisher, and to whitewash the blackened walls again without delay. In the canton of Berne things were slightly better. Out of seventy-nine churches or chapelries, forty-five were monastic; in nineteen the service-books were insufficient, eight roofs needed repair, thirty-six churchyards were insufficiently fenced, nine chancel-walls were blackened, and profane objects were stored in two churches. There are a large number of smaller defects in nearly all the parishes.¹ A visitation of the diocese of Worms, in 1496, records many defects in churches appropriated to monasteries; and in one at least the rain fell upon the altar.²

It was natural that these abuses should cause serious concern. In 1263 the Provincial Council of Rouen decreed "that abbots and priors and other ecclesiastical persons who take the great tithes from parish churches be compelled to restore the fabric, the books and the ornaments *pro rata* with what they receive from the same".³ Bishop Guillaume Durand in his memorial to the Ecumenical Council of Vienne (1311) wrote:

Another negligence concerning divine service is the matter of church ornaments; for in many parish churches, (and especially in such as are in the presentation, collation or disposition of exempt

¹ The visitors reported also on the present canton of Fribourg (printed in *Archives de la Soc. d'Hist. du canton de Fribourg* (1850), I. The Berne series is printed in vol. I of *Abhandlungen d. hist. Vereins d. Kantons Bern*; the Vaud series is still in MS., and can be consulted at the Archives Cantonales opposite the Cathedral of Lausanne.

² *Zeitsch. f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins* (1875), xxvii.

³ Odo Rigaldi, *Reg.* p. 482.

Religious,) there is a general defect of vestments and priestly garments; as also of books, chalices, and other church ornaments. And in some churches the vestments are so vile and sordid that they raise disgust [*abominationem inducunt*].¹

In Scotland (1462) the Bishop of Aberdeen wrote to the pope that the majority of churches in his diocese were now appropriated, "which churches are for the most part ruinous and lacking in ornaments and other things necessary for divine worship".² It would probably be possible to find a good many entries in the *Calendars of Papal Letters* similar to this which concerns Kilmainham church, appropriated to the Augustinians of Toomyvora:

In consequence of the neglect of the said warden and convent, the said church has been almost brought to ruin, divine worship is not celebrated therein as it ought to be, the cure of souls of the parishioners is abandoned, and many of them have died without confession [and] the sacraments of Eucharist and Extreme Unction.³

These things may suffice to justify the brief judgement which I have already quoted from Professor Hamilton Thompson, whose words as to the responsibilities of the monks for the fabric of their parish churches may be found more fully in my Appendix to chapter XII.

If the monks had found no greater moral difficulty in these appropriations than the extent to which they involved them in the tithe-system, that alone would have been a hindrance to their vocation which it is difficult to believe that St Benedict would have faced. Without raising the question whether any better solution has ever been found for the problem of giving the spiritual labourer his hire, the friction caused by the law of tithes is undeniable; and it was perhaps even greater in the Middle Ages than in our own day. "The malice of those who possess lands [in shirking of tithes] is infinite": so wrote the future Innocent IV as professor of Canon Law.⁴ I have pointed out in my *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 81, what an enormous proportion

¹ See *Life in M. Ages*, I, 204, from Durand's *Tractatus*, p. 346 (pars III, tit. 58).

² *C.P.L.* XI, 441, 643, 647. In *Scottish Abbeys*, pp. 86-88, I quote similar complaints and concrete instances.

³ *C.P.L.* XII, 190 (1463).

⁴ In *V Libros Decretalium* (1581), f. 170 b.

of legal documents is concerned with this subject, and a reference to the index of my *Medieval Village* will show the painful prominence of tithe quarrels in medieval litigation. Not the least unpopular were the so-called "personal" tithes, which might sometimes be taken from the income even of a day-labourer or maidservant, and the pecuniary importance of which transpires from a recently published monastic document.¹ And the difficulty, especially on the Continent, was increased by subdivision of tithes, which gave endless further chances of quarrel. For instance, the nuns of Jully, in 1246, acquired "two-thirds of the third part of the tithes of Villemorien".² Seignobos quotes an extreme case in which one man held $\frac{1}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$ of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the tithe of such and such a place.³ This was far more frequent on the Continent than in England; but even with us the system was complicated to an extent which few modern readers realize. I have given a quite ordinary typical instance on p. 76 of *Scottish Abbeys*; here is one from England. It is not in any way exceptional, I think, in the actual burdens here laid on the parish and the vicar, but only in rehearsing these in much fuller detail than usual, and in thus showing the great disadvantages attendant upon the absenteeism of the rector—for of course the priory was rector in this case. It comes from St Frideswide's at Oxford. The vicar agreed with the prior's complaint

that it was and is grievous and burdensome for himself and his convent to collect, and reduce to money, the personal and small tithes, the oblations and other dues in the aforesaid parish, from which they are far removed, and thence to make the said heavy payments yearly to the said vicar.

The bishop, therefore, ratified the agreement of these two parties that, henceforth, the vicar should receive for himself

all the oblations which are paid quarterly by all his parishioners; also whatsoever is given at weddings, purifications [of women] and burials, from the parishioners of Sarsden⁴ as well; also at anniversaries, and to the images in the said church, in whatever wise and in whatever place, in wax or money or eggs or fruit of the ground, whether by law or by custom or of the giver's free will; also the canonical

¹ *Liber Pensionum*, Worcs. Hist. Soc. (1371), p. 36.

² *Jully*, p. 142.

³ Lavissee and Rambaud, *Hist. Générale*, II, 48 n.

⁴ Sarsden and Churchill, lying close together, form nowadays one parish.

fourth part of all funeral offerings of the said parishioners who may be buried elsewhere than at Churchill, which by law or custom are due to the parish church. *Item* all tithes of calves, lambs, foals, piglings, rabbits, geese, and eggs, even from the parishioners of Sarsden; of milk and flax and hemp, of apples and bees and fruits and all such garden produce; and of the mill of the lord [of the manor] at Churchill. Also all tithes of fleeces, singular or in odd numbers, which are not wont to be tithed but in money: *item*, all tithes proceeding, after any manner whatsoever, from hunting or fishing, from merchants and artificers and hirelings;¹ *item*, all mortuaries, even from the parishioners of Sarsden, whether living or dead, without any fraud, except when such mortuary consists in a horse or ox.²

This last clause alludes to the system by which, in very many cases, both lord of manor and rector had very heavy succession rights. If the dead peasant had possessed as many as three head of cattle, the lord might seize the best as his "heriot", and the rector the second best as his "mortuary". In default of sufficient cattle, they claimed the best garment, or a brass pot, or some similar household article. It will be noted that, in this accord, the most valuable mortuaries would go to the convent; so also, of course, would all the "great tithes" of corn.

In the quarrels thus resulting between the "regular" (cloistered) and the "secular" (mostly parochial) clergy, the laity naturally inclined on the whole to the latter side. It has more than once been remarked that Chaucer is more favourable to the Poor Priest than even to the Prioress, and immeasurably more than to the rest of the cloistered clergy. Popular insurrections, again, were fairly often led by parish priests, less often by friars; and they commonly ended in attacks upon monasteries. The monastic chronicler Thorne asserts that, in the dispute between the monks of St Augustine's, Canterbury, and the king concerning the rich rectory of Faversham, the archdeacon and some of the neighbouring clergy came and destroyed an altar, burned the altar-cloths and corporals, and melted the chalices, claiming the archbishop's authority for this, in the face of the multitude of parishioners.³ Sometimes, again, pathetic

¹ These "personal tithes" were much less common on the Continent than in England.

² *Cart. St Frideswide*, II, 295.

³ *Chronica*, c. xvii (Twyssden, col. 1849).

pleas survive from the parish itself, as in that petition which the villagers of Jully addressed, in the sixteenth century, to the priory which had appropriated their church. They complain of their uncertain tenure and the amount and variety of their rents; and, coming to the death duties which they paid to the monks in lieu of the old mortuary system—duties which were paid even for little children, whose death cost the household five *sols*—they add “whereof the parish priest takes only the third part”.¹ At Biesheim, near Colmar in Alsace, there was a chapel dependent upon a neighbouring priory. In [1480] the official visitors for the Cluniac General Chapter were met by “7 or 8 principal inhabitants, on behalf of the whole village”, who besought that the prior might be compelled to give them one or two Masses a week, as his predecessors had always done. The prior pleaded that he had no such obligation; the visitors referred the dispute to arbitration; but, meanwhile, “We enjoined that the Holy Eucharist and the baptismal font shall be kept in future not in the said chapel, but in the mother-church of the priory, where is the burial ground”. So much, at any rate, the villagers lost by disputing with the monastery, whether the arbitrator granted them their Masses or not.² I give in my Appendix the full text of a similar case in fifteenth-century Suffolk. Heigham church was appropriated to the priory of Holy Trinity, Ipswich, eight miles distant. The village complained to the bishop against the prior’s “default of finding of parish priest there to do and keep divine services and there to minister the sacrament of Holy Church to the parishioners of the same”. The bishop gave them his sealed warrant to sequester the revenues, and give them to a priest appointed by themselves. Upon this, the prior brought a plaint of trespass, in the Ipswich Borough Court, against the leader of this village protest, who had no remedy but to appeal to the King in Chancery. Here, as in so many similar cases, we have no record of the result.³ But it may well have been, however different in detail, as unsatisfactory in substance as in a Scottish case decided by Pope Martin [IV]. The villagers of [Park], which was

¹ *Jully*, p. 413.

² Duckett, *Visitations and Chapters General*, p. 180.

³ P.R.O. *Chancery Proceedings*, c. 1, Bundle 47, No. 76.

a chapelry of the church of Blair, were prosecuted by "the abbot and convent of Scone, who by canonical right hold that church to their own uses", for the crime that

of their own temerity, they contemn to come to the said church, as they are bounden, there to receive the Church sacraments and hear God's word, rashly causing alien priests to celebrate divine service for them in another church, to the no small prejudice and grievance of the abbot and convent, and the aforesaid church of Blair.

There could be no doubt, unfortunately, that the abbey had the law on its side.¹

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that some parishes became altogether extinct, as we find with Lullington and Rokesby in Kent,² and at Bérolle in Switzerland, where the episcopal visitor in 1416 found only "a certain aged woman" to unlock the church; there was no vicar for the moment, and "the parishioners answered that in a single year there had been seven separate priests to serve it".³ Several cases, almost as bad, occur in a fifteenth-century visitation of the great diocese of Worms.⁴ In 1314, an English vicarage was being reduced to desolation.⁵ The destruction of parishes by the Cistercian farming system is well known; I have given evidence in my *Medieval Village*, p. 224. Another instance may be found in Chuzel, p. 68.

Nothing contributed more than this to that changed feeling of the later Middle Ages which is in itself indisputable. Men felt that the monk must now be strictly weighed in the balance; that his services to the community must be exactly estimated; and these services must be set clearly against the money he draws from the community. The great Oxford chancellor Thomas Gascoigne audited this account, most explicitly and repeatedly, about 1450. He came over and over again to the subject; it will suffice to quote two sentences. He writes:

From the omission of such good things [as might be done if the ecclesiastical revenues were not diverted from the parish], it cometh oftentimes to pass that many more persons go to hell than those who

¹ *Lib. Eccl. de Scon*, p. 170.

² *Reg. Roff.* pp. 477, 588.

³ *Mém. de soc. hist. Suisse Romande* (1921), XI, 14.

⁴ *Zeitsch. f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins*, XXVII.

⁵ *Liber Albus*, Worcs. Hist. Soc. I, xxxiii.

are fed in the monasteries through such appropriations. Frequently, by such appropriations, spiritual goods are not increased in the monasteries, but rather superfluous and unnecessary ornaments, or gluttonous dishes and vicious irregularities.¹

The cry to Parliament from the forsaken parishes, in 1425, does not represent vicarages only, but all villages which suffered from the frequent non-residence of the rector: yet it adds force to the foregoing evidence.² The parishes had been plundered for centuries, by laity or by churchfolk, before the Reformation came. It was one of the things which smoothed the path for Henry VIII. This concentration of Church property, and especially of parochial tithes, in one single institution, facilitated royal spoliation in practice when once it had been decided in theory. Just as Wolsey, by his combination of quasi-papal and quasi-regal power, made it easier for Henry to strike him down and become king-pope himself, so also the monks, by collecting so huge a proportion of all the parochial incomes into their own hive, made it a simple task for this bear to swallow the whole honey at two gulps. So, again, in Scotland, the barons had put most of the church revenues into their pockets long before the Reformation, by licence from king and pope.³

Men are often better than their opportunities, just as, again, they are sometimes worse. But the fact remains that opportunity is a great factor in human action: "How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done!" There is no abomination that is impossible in the long run, when the gate has steadily been left open for negligence, and negligence has grown into comfortable custom, and custom has worn a deepening rut from century to century. Here, for instance, is a voice from Chamalières on the Upper Loire, just before the Revolution. The *seigneur* here was, and had been for some thousand years, the prior of the monastery. The inhabitants, in accordance with Government instructions, sent their *cahier*, or formal memoir, through their two deputies to the États-Généraux of 1789. They complained that, in spite of the poverty of the country and its liability to devastating floods, yet "whatsoever remonstrances

¹ *Lib. Ver.* p. III.

² Full text in Appendix.

³ Cf. *Scottish Abbeys*, pp. 254 ff.

and complaints they have made in their misfortunes, nobody has deigned to grant them the least indemnity". On the other hand, extra taxes have been exacted for about twelve years past on the special plea of road-mending; yet "nobody has deigned to do the slightest repair on the roads". The prior, though he has all the tithes and much of the feudal dues, "carries out no repairs in his church of Chamalières, and gives no alms whatsoever to the poor of the parish". Although there are 600 communicants, he refuses to pay a curate for the overworked vicar. Again, "The aforesaid inhabitants complain that, in this province of Languedoc, beggars and tramps are not arrested as in other provinces; so that the said beggars flock to this province and extort alms by force; and men dare not refuse them for fear of being robbed or burnt out of house and home". They pray, therefore, that church property may pay taxes like that of poor layfolk, that all priories in which the priors have ceased to reside may be suppressed, and that the monks' pensions may be brought down to the level of country curates.¹ Their own priors, as other documents show, had been non-resident for generations; the monks, from twenty-seven in the thirteenth century, had dwindled to three, who kept three servants and considered themselves straitened by possessing only 1840 *livres* a year between them. A provincial church statute of 1787, at last, fixed the "congruous pension" of a monk ideally at from 1100 to 1300 *livres* a year, according to his age. For in 1717 the monks of Chamalières were paying only 300 *livres* a year to the incumbent of their large and important parish.

Here, again, is an equally significant incident. In 1739 the priory muniments show how Étienne Veyre died intestate, and his estate thus reverted to the prior, as lord of the manor. "But, considering the smallness of the sum, which amounted only to 45 *livres*, and the expenses to which his widow had been put during her husband's illness and for his funeral honours, the prior renounced his rights, on condition that she will pay the accustomed dues and give 20 *livres* to the parish church." This same church, from which the prior took all the tithes, had been reported in 1717 as in a disgraceful condition of repair and furniture, with rain dripping through its roof, and three of its

¹ This last clause was struck out at the final revision.

chapels lacking ornaments of any kind. The prior had steadily neglected the bishop's order that he should repair it.¹

For other testimony from post-Reformation France and Austria, and for Latimer's criticism of parish neglect, see Appendix.

At this point, however, let me pause to warn readers against exaggerated impressions from the evidence produced in these two chapters. I have given full details, because I know nowhere else where such details are given, and because they seem indispensable to any complete picture of social history. I feel no doubt that Church endowments lent themselves, from generation to generation, to abuses which were far from ceasing at the Reformation, but which would not be tolerated for a single day in modern Britain. Yet we must judge those times by their own circumstances, and things which would be shameful now were far more excusable in the Middle Ages. It was certainly less wrong that the monk should have such control of the parish revenues than that the lay lord should deal with them at his own will; yet this had been common in pre-Conquest England, and had been far more frequent on the Continent, and lasted longer there. It was even better, on the whole, that a parish should be appropriated once for all than that, if it were in the King's patronage and wealthy, it should be committed habitually to a succession of royal clerks. The stream of appropriations started in days when a considerable proportion of the monks were true missionaries; the real pity is that it quickened its pace in proportion as the monasteries cooled in religious fervour, and that, offering economic temptations not only to the Religious themselves but to popes and kings and bishops, it soon overflowed all reasonable bounds, and became most ungovernable when all good churchfolk were least willing to approve it. Yet we must always remember that men no more take complete advantage of their bad opportunities than of their good. Vicarages may sometimes be found not only comfortably but even well endowed, especially where the parish was large enough to need assistant clergy. Yet, on the whole, statistics corroborate the literary evidence, showing us an underpaid and undervalued class of men.

¹ Abbé R. Pontvianne, *Le Prieuré Conventuel de Chamalières* (Le Puy, 1904), pp. 139, 154, 156, 217ff., 223.

CHAPTER XIV

DOWRIES AND CORRODIES

WE come now to what may be classed as minor sources of monastic income, whether we regard them from the financial point of view or from that of their social importance.

At many times and places it was customary to require that the monk, and still more the nun, should bring a dowry into the convent. This was as natural in practice as it was indefensible in theory. To the Canon Lawyer, it was evident simony. The monastic vow was a spiritual grace, almost an eighth sacrament of the Church. It had, like baptism, the effect of washing away all past sin—assuming, of course, that the confession bound up with the ceremony had been sincere. To admit that such a spiritual grace could be bought or sold would have been to condone plain simony; and therefore Canon Law drew the necessary distinction between voluntary gifts and compulsory exactions. In the days of monastic fervour, when rich folk came in, they nearly always brought their wealth to their fellows the *pauperes Christi*, instead of distributing it among the paupers of the world. Rich parents, again, naturally and laudably gave rich gifts with their sons. Then, when the stream of spontaneous endowments began to slacken, it was equally natural that the monastery should emphasize the principle, consonant alike with self-interest and with Canon Law, that a custom, provided it be pious, obtains by long continuance the force of binding law. Abbeys which for generations had been accustomed to gifts from, or on behalf of, their new converts, thought themselves entitled to insist upon this as a pious custom. The strict Canon Lawyer, however, was compelled to condemn it as impious; not only because, in its very essence, such a bargain smacked of simony, but also because it was explicitly and repeatedly forbidden in the highest quarters. Charles the Great's synod of Frankfurt forbade it in 794 (§ 16). A decree of Paschal II [1110] was interpreted by the canonists in the same sense.¹ The abbey

¹ Gratian, *Decretum*, Causa I, q. iii, c. 7; Van Espen, I, 203.

of Molesme had begun in strict Benedictine poverty (1075); but less than 15 years after the foundation of the abbey we find the monks promising to receive a noble into their community provided that he brought "a competent endowment" with him.¹ Abbot Geoffrey of Vendôme (1091) wrote to a religious friend asking him to send promising young clerics as recruits to his abbey. He thought it pertinent to add that he would demand no dowry with them, but would accept such (as the Rule permits) if it were freely offered: "for", he wrote, "our Order demands us to busy ourselves not with worldly gain but with the winning of souls". Upon this Mabillon comments: "Would that this were deeply imprinted in the minds of our brethren to-day! For it is most shameful that men who have once left all their possessions, and who are sufficiently endowed, should demand a dowry from those whom Christ has called to Himself."²

The Council of London forbade compulsory dowries in 1127 (c. 3).³ Alexander III stigmatized them as a mortal sin at the Council of Tours (1163, c. 6) and repeated his prohibition at the 3rd Ecumenical Lateran Council (1179, c. 10). Giraldus Cambrensis, writing after this event, in a book which he tells us he presented to Innocent III, asserts that "in Cluniac nunneries few or none are received without money payment".⁴ Innocent himself, at the 4th Lateran Council (1215) repeated Alexander's prohibition with still greater emphasis, and now for the first time attached a definite sanction to this law. Simony, declared the pope, had so infected the nunneries that there was scarce any that would admit girls without a dowry. Therefore, in future, both the superior who received the money and the girl who paid it were to be "expelled inexorably from the monastery, and thrust into one of stricter observance, to do perpetual penance.... This same we decree with regard to monks and other regular clergy. Moreover, lest they be able to excuse themselves on the ground of simplicity or ignorance, we com-

¹ *Cartulaire de Molesme*, I, 118 n. 5, 135, II, 177.

² Mabillon, *Annales O.S.B.* (1740), v, 293.

³ Other prohibitions by local Councils are Melfi, 1089, c. 7; London, 1175, c. 8; Montpellier, 1215; Oxford, 1222, cc. 34, 35; Cognac, 1238, c. 20; Paris, 1429, c. 3; Sens, 1460, art. 3, c. 3. It was forbidden by Cluniac General Chapter Statutes in 1200 (*Bib. Cluniacensis*, p. 1459) and Augustinian in 1220 (Salter, *Chapters*, p. 23).

⁴ *Gemma Ecclesiastica* (Opera, R.S. II, 289).

mand that diocesan bishops cause this to be published yearly throughout their dioceses". This decree was incorporated in Canon Law (*Decret. Greg.* lib. v, tit. iii, c. 40). Yet certainly it was among the "many" decrees of that Council which, on the testimony of a chronicler 45 years later, "are by no means well kept or observed".¹ For, somewhere about 1235, St Edmund Rich, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was left as guardian to his two sisters just before their mother's death [1210]. His contemporary biographer tells us how she commissioned him to find a nunnery for them, and adds: "He was anxious to perform this; yet he could scarce find any convent that would receive them unless he would contract to give a certain sum with them at their entrance. But he, detesting the sin of simony with all his soul, would not on any account submit their entrance to a price. At last, after the lapse of some time, he came by chance to the nunnery of Catesby", where the prioress begged him of her own accord to send his sisters thither; "whom, when sent, she retained and received into the congregation without any promise or payment."² Yet there is no hint that this fearless saint, when raised to the primacy, took any steps whatever to carry out the commands of the Lateran Council. He held a Provincial Council in 1234, whose statutes are among the foundations of local law for the English Church; they number 39, and run to nearly four folio pages; they even treat at one point "of entrance into Religion", but this is only to prevent married folk from deserting their partners for the cloister (no. 28). Even where St Edmund prescribes that certain offenders shall be excommunicated from the pulpit thrice a year, he does not take advantage of that statute of five years earlier in which his predecessor had denounced simoniacs. There is no trace, I believe, of any organized attempt of the bishops to obey Innocent's command, and to fight steadily from year to year against monastic dowries. On the contrary, the one conspicuous case which I have met concerns not a bishop but an abbot, whom the chronicler Walsingham holds up as an exceptionally firm

¹ Ménestrel de Reims, ed. N. de Wailly (1876), p. 76.

² Martène, *Thesaurus*, III, col. 1780. The treatment of this incident by so eminent and candid a writer as Bishop Bernard Ward is extraordinarily significant for the danger of reading medieval history by the light of the modern Roman Church: see Appendix for full text.

and courageous disciplinarian. Abbot Richard Wallingford of St Albans (1326-35) was so strict that some of his monks

being definitely noted of simoniacal entrance into the community, and having confessed this before the abbot, but pretending ignorance of the law, received a respite of two months, being suspended meanwhile from choir, in order that, if they could find favour to enter any other religious Order through their own or their friends' efforts, they might strive thereunto with all diligence, and the abbot would licence them to depart; otherwise he would condemn them to perpetual penitence. So, when this period of two months was fulfilled, they came in tears to the abbot, saying that they could not compass any change of Order; wherefore they besought God's and his mercy. So the abbot, having summoned the chapter in his own chapel, because he was too sick to enter the customary chapter-house, with the prior and elder brethren as assessors, made them publicly renounce the [Benedictine] Order; and, stripping them of whatsoever appertained to the abbey, he sent them from him, until he should have taken counsel with the brethren to consider what should be done with them.¹

There is no further record of these monks; and it looks very much as though things ended here as the chronicler tells us they ended in the case of those unchaste brethren against whom Abbot Richard was kindled at first to such fierce indignation, but some of whom were allowed to purge themselves "God knoweth how", while those for whom no excuse could be offered were finally dealt with "very mercifully", as also were those who had been guilty of *proprietas*. Walsingham's summary of the whole affair is that it revealed "certain things which notably demanded reform; but, through the malice of men, they were not so notably reformed".

In any case, even if we hope that Abbot Richard's severity produced a deep impression then and there, it would be difficult to find a parallel to it. As early as 1292, less than three generations after the Lateran decree, Archbishop Romeyn of York evidently looked upon the gratuitous reception of a particular brother into the priory of Newburgh as worthy of emphasis in his register.² When we come down to 1434, we find an exceptionally energetic prelate, Gray of Lincoln, actually giving

¹ *Gest. Abbatum*, II, 197.

² *Reg. Romeyn*, I, 175.

his blessing to flatly simoniacal admissions at Croyland. One of his injunctions left after the official visitation ran:

Also, since by the laudable custom of the said monastery it has been observed therein that every monk, within three years after his reception as a monk, shall be bound to make provision of a mazer set in silver-gilt or of a silver bowl and a silver spoon at his own charges, and to deliver them into the frater to remain therein for ever, we will, enjoin and command, under the penalties written above and beneath, that every monk who has been already admitted or is to be admitted hereafter shall take effectual care to make provision and delivery of the aforesaid mazer or bowl and spoon, according to the form of the aforesaid custom and within the term aforesaid.¹

There was, indeed, a certain logic in this breach of Canon Law. Church sacraments had originally been gratuitous, and none had ever dared to deny lip-homage to that rule: theoretically, it was always simoniacal to insist upon payment for any Sacrament. Yet, from a comparatively early date, certain voluntary payments had become so usual that it was difficult at first to refuse them, and at last practically impossible. Here, then, came in that convenient principle of Canon Law, that a custom, if "pious", gradually acquired the binding force of a statute. Thus there grew up a double code of morality; the impiety of refusing fees for the Sacraments was held to outweigh the impiety of exacting them, since this latter impiety had also its pious side. Almost at the very time that St Edmund was making his unsuccessful searches for a non-simoniacal nunnery, his predecessor was very seriously concerned with the prevalence of simony in the Church. He decreed, at his Provincial Council of 1229 (§ 7): "Therefore we command that, from henceforth, nothing be exacted for Chrism or Baptism or Extreme Unction or Burial or Communion or Dedication; but Christ's gratuitous gifts shall be gratuitously dispensed. If any man presume to do otherwise, let him be bound with the bond of excommunication." In spite of this, the Mass-penny at Easter and similar payments were constantly exacted; moreover, for all the succeeding centuries, as for many centuries in the past, stipulated payments for private Masses were among the most lucrative sources of clerical income. Fine philosophical distinctions were drawn, but such as the

¹ *Lincoln Record Soc.* vii, 38.

multitude could not possibly have understood, and such as embarrassed some even among the most learned and pious. Among these was Giraldus Cambrensis; the offenders (he wrote) "think to defend themselves by pleading custom, and a certain spontaneous liberality"; and in that same passage, he speaks with horror of the sale of Masses. To the very end, these subterfuges were pleaded by the interested parties, and exposed in all their hollowness by great theologians. Dionysius Carthusianus fought for purity here; so did his younger contemporary Meffret (1443), who wrote: "Some men say 'we will gladly receive this man; but it is customary that, if he will enter the cloister, he should give ten or twenty marks'. We cannot call that which involves mortal sin by the name of *custom*; that which palliates simony must rather be called *corruption*, or *corrupt wickedness*."¹ He tells of a nunnery of St Augustine's and St Jerome's day where the walls fell flat and crushed every nun within them for this sin of simony; but we know from Chaucer that men had ceased to be much impressed by appeals to the far-off examples of Augustine and Jerome.

Monastic dowries were one of the matters complained of before the Council of Constance (1415).² St Antonino of Florence [1440], while insisting on the deadliness of the sin, adds: "Such simony is mainly found among nuns throughout the world; but it is not so common [*non sic est*] with male Religious."³ In France, on the eve of the Reformation, the abuse was rampant.⁴ In 1520 a candidate pleaded that he had not been able to take the full vows at a French abbey "because his father could not afford the banquet usual on this occasion".⁵ Abbé Chuzel, in his history of Bonnevaux, notes many cases of dowry down to 1186; after this, he remarks, the rich voluntary endowments ceased which had sometimes come with earlier postulants.⁶ St-Martial de Limoges was a great and rich abbey; in 1213 the chronicler finds it notable that "we made a monk of the priest Pierre l'Espagnol for God's sake [*pro amore Dei*], and the convent

¹ D. Cart. *Opera*, xxxviii, 294; cf. pp. 302, 322. Meffret, *Serm. de Tempore*, No. LX, H (p. 321).

² V. d. Hardt, III, 148.

³ *Summa Confessionalis* (Lyon, 1564), pars III, p. 335.

⁴ Imbart de la Tour, *Origines de la réforme*, I, 357.

⁵ *Revue Mabillon* (1931), xxi, 204; cf. p. 44.

⁶ Pp. 67, 74-5, 81, 83.

gave him his garments both for bed and for his back; and he gave us three books".¹ A good deal may be learned, again, from an English instance at the Cistercian abbey of Meaux. The editor, Dr Bond, may perhaps generalize from it rather too freely; but to those who interest themselves in monastic charters there is nothing surprising in this case.

Thomas, son of Sir John of Meaux of Owthorne, after having married and reared a large family, falling into poor circumstances at Beverley, gave to the monastery the property he had received with his wife, and entered as a novice. He did this during his wife's lifetime, and gave away her lands without her consent. She reclaimed the property, and the monks had to pay twenty marks for her confirmation of her husband's donation. In this latter instance it is evident that admission to the convent was purchased as a means of maintenance for life, and this was probably the ordinary inducement for entering it when the period of zealous asceticism had passed away. In the majority of the cases cited mere weariness of the world seems to have been the prevailing motive for seeking the cloister.²

If the dowry system is less often mentioned in papal pronouncements during the last generations of the Middle Ages, and less commented upon by official visitors, this is not because the strict disciplinarians had won, but rather because they had lost heart. The great canonist Van Espen, writing from Louvain in 1699, had to deal with the same subterfuges which had encouraged simoniacs in the past. He falls back upon Gratian's authority to confute those who argue "that those who give money at their entrance into Religion are buying, not the religious profession but a participation in the revenues of the monastery: therefore they buy temporal and not spiritual things, and cannot be classed as simoniacs". "To this the answer is, that we condemn as simoniacs not only those who buy spiritual things, but also those who give a price for the temporalities annexed to those spiritualities", and he quotes from Pope Paschasius: "Whosoever sells either of these two things which are inseparable from each other, does not fail to sell both". The headings to some of his further arguments will here suffice. Chapter II, § 1: "For many centuries past, Regulars have sought to palliate their simoniacal exactions under pretext of poverty."

¹ *St-Martial*, p. 90.

² *Chron. de Melsa*, R.S. III, xxxix. For other cases see Appendix.

§ 2: "The pretext of poverty is frequently pleaded by monasteries when in fact none such exists." § 3: "Many monasteries seem insufficient because they expend their revenues ill." § 7: "It is foul simony to demand money for the supply of feasts on the day of investiture or of profession." § 9: "Monasteries even of insufficient revenues incur simony when they receive a postulant for money's sake." Thence he passes on (Chapter III) to "The means for extirpating simoniacal compacts".¹

Even more significant is a treatise by another seventeenth-century scholar, the Jesuit Théophile Raynaud.² Incidentally, his treatment of the subject of monastic trade compels him to face the dowry system, and he is still more embarrassed to reconcile the ingrained custom of his Church with primitive Christian theory and with papal or conciliar prohibitions. One of his arguments, indeed, deserves a place in the history of casuistry. He writes:

St Bonaventura, in his *Libellus Apologeticus* [quaest. 18], confesses that in his day a simoniacal contract was common in many poor monasteries, by which a person is received for money, whereas they would by no means receive her without the money, even if the monastery had from other sources enough to sustain that girl. This (says the Saint) is a plain selling of the membership of a spiritual society for money; and that is simony. And (says he) "many do this also from sheer want, hoping that someone will come with money whom they may receive to relieve their want or to pay the debts they have contracted, or to buy possessions which they covet, or for building-costs". The same judgement was given by Innocent VIII in an answer to the nuns of St Clare quoted by Rodrigo in the 2nd volume of his *Questions on the Rule*, q. 49, art. 1. But this pope's answer was given as a private doctor. For, if we were to stand by this, it is marvellous how much simony would be found to rage not only among the nunneries but also among the men's convents in these days. For it happens daily that otherwise unsuitable folk [*personae alioqui inidoneae*], who would on no account be admitted if they came without money, are yet received if they bring a fat

¹ Van Espen, *Opera* (1715), I, 203. It is interesting to compare these three chapters with Bishop Ward's words as quoted in my Appendix.

² Hipparchus, *de Religioso Negotiatore*, in his collected works, xx, 320. The French translation, *Le Moine Marchand* (Amsterdam, 1714), though made by a Protestant, does not deserve Sommervogel's condemnation (*Bib. Écrivains Comp. Jésus*, VI, col. 1529). I have collated many of the most important pages, and found no freedom in the rendering which has the least historical or controversial significance.

dowry. And, although there may be sin here in other directions, yet we can distinguish no certain note of simony, if that sum be neither given nor required as a price, but be only introduced as a motive for removal of the difficulties which would arise from the admission of such a person. Similarly the husband who, when a dowry is laid down, is glad to take an ugly [*deformem*] woman whom he would not otherwise have married, is not a simoniacal seller of the sacrament of matrimony, even though he enter upon the conjugal state for money's sake, without which he would not have married; since that phrase *for money's sake* doth not denote the price of the sacramental contract, but his motive for overcoming the difficulties involved in his marriage.¹

Another frequent minor source of income was the sale of corrodies.² The word was originally used for a monk's daily allowance; and in that sense we shall recur later to the system for the light that it throws upon monastic diet and creature comforts. But it was gradually used (and in by far the largest number of cases) for any regular pension, nearly always in kind but sometimes in money, granted by the monastery. No instance has ever been quoted, so far as I know, of such a grant made out of pure charity; it would hardly be reasonable to expect any such. In a few cases, we find a corrody given as a pension to a trusted and worn-out servant of the monastery; though, even here, the grant might not be wholly gratuitous.³ It was much more frequent for corrodies to be given at the demand of a king or other great man who by hereditary right was reckoned as "founder" of the monastery in question. This was inconvenient not only from the financial but also from the disciplinary point of view; but it was a plague which seldom attacked any except the great abbeys; it was one of the penalties of their wealth. The Worcester case on which Canon Wilson bases his above-

¹ T. Raynaudi *Opera* (Cracow, 1669), xx, 368, § 139. This illustrates one of the many apparent anomalies involved in the dogma that marriage is a sacrament.

² An excellent account of the corrody system may be found in Professor A. Hamilton Thompson's paper on "A Corrody from a Leicester Abbey" (*Trans. Leicester Arch. Soc.* (1925), xiv, 114); another by Canon J. M. Wilson and Miss E. C. Jones (*Worcs. Hist. Soc.* 1917); compare also Snape, pp. 139-45, and Kitchin, *Obedientiary Rolls of St Swithun's*, pp. 23-5.

³ The late Canon J. M. Wilson sent me a note from fol. 99 a of the Worcester *Liber Albus*. The porter of the cathedral priory is to have a corrody for life; but he pays down a lump sum of £25, equivalent to the yearly income of five vicars.

mentioned study is of special interest, because it sums up fifty-one letters exchanged between the crown and the cathedral priory. The dispute began in 1308, when Queen Isabella requested a corrody, to be received daily "in your house" by Alice Conan, lady-in-waiting to the king's niece. The priory, with some trouble, succeeded in putting the petitioner off. Much later, Alice became lady-in-waiting to the queen, and then the request was resumed (1322). King, queen and chancellor pressed the claims of Alice to the corrody lately held by Peter d'Avilliers, deceased. This was, of course, the ordinary royal claim to appoint a corrodian to a monastery of royal foundation, except that the recipient was here a lady. The monks pleaded not only hard times and poverty but "if it please you, be good enough to understand that the sojourn of damoiselles for life within houses of Religious turns rather to disadvantage and to damage than to propriety [*convenableté*] or profit".¹ They tried to buy her off with a present; the correspondence became more and more heated on the royal side, more and more deprecatory on the other. On September 6, 1323, Edward "orders peremptorily that they shall admit Alice, and secure for her under their common seal the allowance they had given to Peter". The priory pleaded that the king might get her a corrody among the nuns at Nuneaton; but their chief plea here, as in all the letters, is one of pecuniary difficulties. These will be prohibitory, "unless God come to our help". In a later letter, the king reminded them that his father had got them the appropriation of the fat living of Lindridge "for the profit of his soul and of the house of Worcester".² A few letters later, again, "you are dragging the said Alice through disputes and pleadings, whereat we hold ourselves grievously displeased" (*à mal paiez*). After many more letters, the priory finally consented to pay Alice £10 a year on condition that no such claim be repeated thenceforth.

But such enforced corrodians, though too numerous from one point of view, formed a very small minority of the whole; it may

¹ Canon Wilson here quotes two cases by way of parallel; yet in one, as he explains, the lady lodged not in the monastery but in a house near Kidderminster; while in the second case he recognized to me afterwards that the name which he had taken for *Ada* was in fact *Adam*.

² This is the bad job against which Bishop Swinfield had struggled for some time, but had at last given in (*Reg. Swinfield*, pp. 421 ff.).

safely be said that in at least nineteen cases out of twenty the corrody was a commercial transaction. In times of stress the temptation to sell annuities for a lump sum was overwhelming; and naturally, in the long run, the remedy became worse than the disease. There was no actuarial science in those days; business methods were comparatively rude; impulse played a far greater part in life than it ordinarily plays nowadays, and few communities, in present need of money, had self-control enough to take full thought for the future. As the St Albans historian puts it, Abbot John II (1235-63) sold a corrody to a young man "to the inestimable damage of his abbey; for we can set no limit to the days of a young man's life".¹ We need not be surprised, therefore, that the system was in bad odour among disciplinarians, and that nearly all the official allusions which have survived are prohibitory or restrictive, or, at least, bear signs of watchful caution. No better illustration could here be chosen than the words of one of our greatest bishops, whose special claims to fame are those of a business man. William of Wykeham visited Southwick priory officially in 1385, and followed this up with a mandate to the prior.

WHEREAS certain abbots and priors, *in that heat of covetousness which doth vehemently inflame their hearts*,² in consideration of money payments, consulting rather their own interests than those of their monasteries, . . . have oftentimes sold and granted liveries and cordies, wherefrom it hath proceeded and is wont more frequently to proceed that, in such abbeys and priories burdened with such sales and grants, the numbers are unduly diminished of those for whose sustentation the said possessions have been specially assigned by the founders thereof and by other faithful Christians, and those abbeys and priories are defrauded of their due services and have suffered very grievous evils, to the peril of the [founders' and benefactors'] souls and to the grievous prejudice and manifest scandal of the said abbeys and priories; THEREFORE the founders of Canon Law, and other holy Fathers had [prohibited] such sales and grants from abbeys and priories; and, desiring prudently to strive against the waste of regular administration in this field, and to extirpate the aforesaid fault, they have strictly forbidden, by means of divers penal statutes, that any Religious in authority over any abbeys, priories or other

¹ *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. II, 319.

² We shall presently see the full significance of the words I have here italicized.

administrations should sell or grant gratuitously, either perpetually or for a time, to clergy or to layfolk, any rights or revenues or possessions or franchises or corrodies, unless this be demanded by urgent necessity and the consent and assent of the Diocesan be first obtained; moreover, they have decreed against those who act contrary to this and who do not revoke their attempt, the penalty of summary suspension from their office.

Therefore, adds the bishop, finding that you, prior of Southwick, have hitherto disregarded this prohibition, but have presumed to violate it in open disobedience of my commands, I repeat the prohibition now "in virtue of obedience, and under the penalty prescribed by law".¹ The register tells us no more of this matter.

It will be seen that Wykeham condemns the corrody system as a thing prohibited by "the founders of Canon Law and other holy Fathers". We must turn aside for a moment here, since a very different impression has been given in a preface written for a learned society by a President of the Royal Historical Society, with the help of the future Cardinal Gasquet; a preface which admirably illustrates the amount of imaginative writing, careless of contemporary evidence, which has to be cleared away before we can get at the truth of monastic life.² Dr Hunt, with a reference to Dean Kitchin's *Winchester Rolls*,³ writes:

These grants are often treated as merely an ingenious and extravagant device for raising ready money by life annuities. This is an unfair way of dealing with the subject, and one that suggests only a partial comprehension of it. . . . At the same time it may be conceded that, considering the temptation to abuse inherent in these transactions, as well as the chance that the sellers might be mistaken in their calculations, the sale of corrodies was by no means to be commended. There appears no reason to believe, except perhaps in one instance where it may be suspected, that any of the numerous corrodies noted in the later of our two Chartularies was granted for

¹ *Reg. Wykeham*, II, 376.

² *Chartularies of Bath Priory*, ed. W. Hunt (Somerset Record Soc. 1893), p. xxiii.

³ The passage is on p. xxv of *Obedientiary Rolls of St Swithun*, and runs: "In the Roll of 1337-8 the Convent is found selling three Corrodies, and receiving the money for them, cash down. . . . It is quite clear that, in order to get present relief, at a time when the affairs of the Convent were seriously involved, the monks were tempted to contract this most unthrifty kind of loan."

a cash payment. Indeed these sales were probably rare, and the system of corrodies must not be dismissed with a sweeping condemnation merely because it was occasionally abused.

It is true that, in this Bath chartulary, the prices are not recorded; but neither are they in the vast majority of other cases; there is no reason why they should be, any more than the prices are recorded for manumissions of serfs, or many other similar business transactions. "The absence of any mention of payment in the document proves nothing" (Snape, p. 143). But the monastic chronicles themselves imply, and "the holy Fathers" imply still more strongly, that a corrody was normally a definite money bargain,¹ and often such an imprudent and short-sighted bargain as to inflict serious damage upon the monastery. The matter is important enough to call for evidence beyond that of the authorities quoted in my footnote.

That Council of 1222 under Stephen Langton, which counts generally as the beginning of English Canon Law,² forbade the granting of corrodies "unless urgent necessity require, and the Diocesan's assent be granted".³ In this decree, the archbishop claimed to be legislating according to existing Canon Law, *secundum Canonicas Sanctiones*; and Wykeham, as we have seen, was convinced also that he was supported by Canon Law. For the decree of 1222 was repeated by the papal legate Othobon, in his conciliar decrees of 1268, with an added emphasis which testified to his sense of urgency. He is resolved (he says)

to extirpate that vice whereby certain abbots, priors, and other rulers of monasteries [*ecclesiarum*], and guardians of hospitals, *through the ardour of covetousness which vehemently inflames their hearts*, for pecuniary considerations, and consulting the interests of persons rather than of Church foundations, commonly sell and assign certain things which are commonly called corrodies [*liberationes*], to be paid

¹ Including, of course, where it was given as payment for services rendered. In 1349 Canterbury Cathedral priory granted a handsome corrody for life to a distinguished lawyer in virtue of his past and future services (*Lit. Cantuar.* R.S. II, 293).

² As Rashdall and Maitland showed, we can speak of a medieval *English* Canon Law only in a restricted sense. Roman Canon Law, the *Corpus Juris Canonici*, was Statute Law for the whole western Church; but it allowed, as by-laws for different countries, the conciliar decrees of each country, so far as they were reconcilable with Statute Law.

³ *Lyndwood*, I, 151, where he notes that *corrodium* is called by its synonym of *liberatio* in Othobon's decree.

for the necessities of life either daily or at fixed seasons; these they assign either for a certain time or for the lifetime of those persons to whom the grant is made.

From this (he proceeds) come the impoverishment of the institutions, and the diminution of numbers among their inmates, "whereby the churches are defrauded of due service, and the poor and sick are cheated of their sustenance, to the peril of the souls of those who grant such corrodies, and the manifest scandal[of the public]: wherefore we most strictly forbid the sale of corrodies of this kind to any persons whatsoever" under pain of excommunication upon all who "presume to violate" this prohibition. Upon this decree the canonist Ayton [1340] comments: "*The sale of corrodies*; much more then, [does he forbid] the gift of them, since less profit cometh to the Church from a gift than from the price of a sale." And, a little later, "It is not often that a man is willing, of pure liberality, to throw away that which is his own.... But in Church matters it cometh oftentimes to pass that the superior dilapidates or bears himself negligently, as one who careth less in that matter than in his own business; therefore the laws meet this more emphatically with prohibitions." A few lines down, again: "*To violate*", i.e. by selling *liberationes seu corrodia*.

Therefore Wykeham's mandate to Southwick, with its appeal to Canon Law, was only a fuller and more emphatic specimen of what is one of the commonest visitatorial injunctions. Of the fifty houses visited by the Bishop of Lincoln's commissioners between 1420 and 1445, twenty-four were forbidden to issue further corrodies; in four of these houses the prohibition had to be repeated at a later visitation. Nor did this persistency on the visitors' part make much impression; there were thirteen cases in the first half (1420-32) and eleven in the second (1433-45). Among the offenders were great houses like Bardney, Croyland, Dunstable, Eynsham, Leicester, St Frideswide's, Oxford, Peterborough and Thornton. In all countries, at least from the thirteenth century onwards, we find bishops or General Chapters prohibiting, or at least sternly restricting, the sale of corrodies; and constantly, as in this Southwick case, we see behind it the desperate shifts of an unbalanced budget. Professor Willard has printed a Glastonbury document of Edward II's time, which

gives a list of nineteen corrodies due to be paid; and one batch of seven names ends with the note, "to all these persons corrodies were sold in relief of the debts wherewith the abbey had aforetime been burdened". Another batch of two has a similar note: of two more it is noted that they had been purchased; one was given to pay the mason-architect for his services, and another to the lawyer who was equally useful to the abbey. Of the rest, four were at the king's request, and two at the queen's; this is an unusual proportion, but Glastonbury was a very conspicuous and rich abbey. It is noteworthy that the six royal corrodians received, on an average, only £4. 6s. a year each, while the corrodians who purchased or earned their corrodies averaged £7. 16s.¹ At Winchcombe, in 1282, the forty-five monks had to pay fifteen corrodies, or as much as would have raised their own conventual numbers to sixty; by the Dissolution, the corrodies had risen to eighteen.² At St Albans we are told how abbot Hugh [1308-26], to maintain his extravagances, sold corrodies to the enormous amount of £2077, which he appropriated to himself. The corrodians thus increased to fifty-four, all of whom had to be kept for their lives at the abbey's expense. The chronicler Walsingham pleads for him, in palliation, that he had had hard times, and that three of his predecessors had sold corrodies which burdened the house with the annual payment of £299, at a time when half the monasteries in the kingdom had not so much as this for their whole annual income.³ Bishops and Councils saw in this one of the open sores of the Church. In 1295 the prelates of England laid a great petition of fifty-one articles before Edward I. One of these runs: "*Item*, whereas by occasion of the monks of Bermondsey it was decreed that Religious should not alienate the goods of the Church, the clergy beseech that the same decree be made against the selling of corrodies."⁴ In 1357 bishop Grandisson of Exeter complained that the monks of his diocese were setting at naught all prohibitions against raising funds by the sale of corrodies, and thus

¹ Somerset Record Soc. *Collectanea* (1924), I, 22ff.

² Dugdale, II, 196.

³ *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. II, 179, 181. Another St Albans chronicler names it among the admirable qualities of abbot Whethamstede (1420-64) that he cut down no woods and granted no corrodies (Amundesham, R.S. II, 267).

⁴ *Reg. Pontissara*, p. 777.

were bringing their houses to deeper poverty, with the result that the founders' souls were defrauded of due service, and the poor of their statutory alms. He appealed to conciliar decrees and to public scandal with the same emphasis which we have seen in Wykeham's mandate, but probably with as little effect; for the subject seems to crop up even more frequently in visitatorial injunctions as time goes on.¹ In the Lincoln visitations, for instance (1420-39), we have nineteen cases in which the bishop's injunctions prohibit the sale of corrodiess.²

The corrody system was thus a sort of commerce, like that of the modern insurance company. We may pass on thence to even more definitely commercial undertakings, ranging from that of the banker or wholesale merchant down to the trade of the village huckster.

¹ *Reg. Grandisson*, p. 1192. For a few curious cases, see Appendix.

² Vol. I, pp. 24, 28, 31, 39, 43, 47, 49, 77, 80, 87, 96, 100, 111, 121, 127; vol. II, pp. 9, 44, 67, 70. Savine, usually so trustworthy, fails us here through natural unfamiliarity with the older documents (pp. 242 ff.). He clearly recognizes that the evidence of the *Valor* is far from exhaustive; but he gives no hint of the body of evidence which we have in the background.

CHAPTER XV

MONKS AND TRADE

TRADE in all forms was almost universally discouraged, if not actually reprobated, by the earliest and strictest Christians.¹ And naturally, through all the centuries, trade has been forbidden to the clergy, with frequent emphasis upon 2 Tim. ii, 4: *Nemo militans Deo implicat se negotiis*. Yet, in process of time, despite the frequent prohibitions of Councils, the wealthiest prelates became wholesale traders. The Oxford chancellor Gascoigne [1450] could complain, with no more than ordinary medieval exaggeration, that "nearly all the monks in certain places are great traders and have many private possessions in the hands of layfolk, and do not permit them to be tithed by the parish priests".²

The great impetus came under the empire of Charles the Great. Under this ruler Europe became sufficiently unified and tranquillized to encourage the revival of ancient imperial commerce; and the monasteries, being among the greatest of proprietors, fell into this current naturally enough, especially when we consider the enormous advantages accruing from those grants of freedom from tolls and taxes which, beginning with only a few royal and specially favoured abbeys, spread sometimes in the course of centuries to whole Orders such as the Cistercians and the Gilbertines.³ A very early and picturesque example is that of St-Wandrille, whose ruins, like those of Jumièges, are still one of the most delightful objects on the Seine. The monks here had free passage for all their goods through all the toll-barriers of the Seine, from the sixth to the sixteenth century, on condition that their boatmen should pipe an air as they came to

¹ See, for instance, W. J. Ashley, *Economic History*, I, pt. i, 126 ff., and my article in *History* for July, 1921, p. 68.

² *Loc. e Lib. Verit.* p. 197.

³ See P. Imbart de la Tour, in *Études dédiées à G. Monod*, pp. 71 ff., where the earliest abbeys thus favoured are enumerated. Another striking instance is that of St-Bavon-de-Gand, which could claim exemption from tolls throughout the whole empire, by a grant from Otto II in 977 (Van Lokeren, pt. II, p. 2).

each bridge and cry aloud, "This stuff belongs to the monks of St-Wandrille."¹

At first, these great and privileged abbeys were very dependent upon royal help for their commerce; not only did the king grant them freedom from toll, but he sometimes laid upon his officers the express duty of helping the transport. But, naturally enough, such help could not always be claimed or enforced without friction; and the monks gradually perfected an independent transport system of their own. For the shorter journeys, they claimed a certain number of carriage-services per year from their tenants; for the more distant, if the monastery was great enough, it had a whole commercial army. "These privileged traffickers were to be met everywhere. First, on the roads, upon which the abbeys despatched their agents, monks or layfolk, whose business was to frequent the great markets and prepare for purchases or sales." Then, a caravan of wagons, pack-horses, mules, or sturdy porters, with an armed retinue for defence. But, above all, "convents and bishoprics had regular flotillas which scoured the waterways in every direction. Nearly all the trade on the Loire was in the hands of the great river-abbeys [in the basins of Seine or Rhone or Rhine or Moselle]. Not less flourishing was the trade by sea." Yet these distant transports depended also, fundamentally, upon the *corvée* system: "All who manned the abbey ships or composed its caravans were, in different forms, its servants, its 'men'. They owed their time or their horse and cart even more in virtue of their tenure than of their condition. But, in return, the abbey was pledged to protect them, and sometimes to feed them." Then, gradually, these men became specialized. At St-Riquier, in the eleventh century, there was a whole quarter in the abbey precincts devoted to its "merchants"; and it is possible that we have here the germ of those merchant-gilds which presently meet us among the citizens of flourishing towns. Again, some of the "new towns" which appear specially in the twelfth century may have grown out of the monks' markets; for the king often gave them market-rights in far outlying corners of their vast possessions.²

¹ Fraipont, p. 84. This gave rise to a Norman proverb, "Do you think to get off by playing the piper, like the monks of St-Wandrille?"

² Imbart de la Tour, *op. cit.*

This system could seldom or never be worked without one or more travelling monks at the head; and so we get a whole class of "outriders", as Chaucer and Langland call them. The abbey is thus remote from the original Benedictine Rule, which insisted on claustration within the immediate monastic precincts, and evidently contemplated few exceptions. Therefore, in proportion as the movement grows, we find disciplinarians harking back more frequently and more emphatically to those numerous passages of Canon Law which forbade trade to the whole clergy, whether Secular or Regular.¹ The chorus of prohibition is loud both from without and from within the cloister; a few instances may suffice here.

From within, we have one of the earliest commentaries on the Benedictine Rule, the *Verba Magistri*. Chapter 85 of the treatise is concerned with this problem: St Benedict wished his monks to do manual labour; such labour might naturally often produce more, in one direction or another, than was needed for consumption within the precincts of the monastery; on what terms, therefore, should these superfluities be distributed? The answer is, they should be sold below market price—apparently, indeed, even below cost price—"in order that the brethren may not be thought to work at their arts for the sake of greed and avarice, but lest the hand which is worthy of just maintenance should stagnate in idleness, and should spend the work-day hours in vain". Here, of course, the disciplinarian is no professional economist, so that he does not look forward to ask what effect this underselling might have on the labour market; indeed, at this early stage, nobody could have foreseen the enormous expansion of monasticism in the eleventh and succeeding centuries.

When that expansion came, with great reformed Orders like the Cistercians, aiming universally at a return to the almost forgotten ideal of manual labour, the problem became still more acute. These great reformers fought against the temptations of trade mainly from the Pauline point of view: "No man being a soldier to God entangleth himself with secular businesses"—*implicat se negotiis*. The Religious cannot mix in purely worldly affairs—still less in worldly markets—without grievous spiritual

¹ For these complaints, and their justification, see my second volume, pp. 9-14.

loss. Even though they had been always impeccably straightforward in business, they would have been backbitten by envious competitors; and, in fact, they too often lent themselves to criticism. As a thoroughly sympathetic author writes: "Sometimes the business transactions of the monks were questionable. In 1457 the prior of St Thomas, Stafford, was sued for £10 damages for having sold a horse *sciens equum illum in varias infirmitates collapsum et ad laborandum impotentem*."¹ And, at a much earlier date, Cardinal Jacques de Vitry wrote:

I have heard of a noble knight who left all his great possessions, and became a monk, that he might serve God in peace and humility. But the Abbot, seeing that in the World he had been a man of many wiles, sent him to the fair to sell the aged asses of the convent and buy younger beasts. The nobleman loved not the task, but bent his will to obey. So when the buyers asked whether these asses were good and young, he deigned not to dissemble, but answered, "Think ye that our convent is come to such poverty as to sell young asses that might be profitable to the house?" When again men asked why they had so little hair on their tails, he replied: "Because they fall oftentimes under their burdens; wherefore, since we raise them again by their tails, these have lost their hair." Thus, when he came home to the cloister without having sold a single beast, then a lay-brother who had gone with him accused him before the Chapter. So the abbots and monks, in white-hot wrath against him, set about beating him with stripes as for a grievous fault. He therefore said to them: "I left behind in the World a multitude of asses and great possessions: therefore I was unwilling to lie for the sake of your asses, and to harm mine own soul by deceiving my neighbours." So thenceforward they never sent him forth on worldly business.²

Therefore St Stephen of Grammont [1080] strictly forbade his Order even to appear upon the market-place; if they needed to buy, they must get some friend of the convent to buy for them.

But perchance ye will say "we shall get it better cheap, if we go to the market [or fair]". We forbid this; for it is better for you to lose a little substance, than to lose your souls by returning again to the world.... Let not any greed tempt you to sell your corn, or anything else which you have gained for your livelihood, if ye can sell it dearer than ye bought it; for thus will ye become traders.

¹ "Knowing that the said horse had fallen into divers infirmities and was impotent for work" (Hibbert, *Diss.* p. 17).

² *Exempla*, p. 21.

Nay, we bid you rather sell more cheaply and buy more dearly, that ye may ever avoid fraud.¹

But, when any Order enlisted the help of lay-brethren, as did the Grammontines, Cistercians, and other reformers, these men became naturally not only agriculturists and craftsmen, but traders. The Cistercian General Chapter records of [1200] show that "among the Religious who carried on the external business of the houses were *conversi mercatores* [trading lay-brethren]. There is a complaint in 1214 that the English *conversi* were in the habit of buying wool cheap and selling it dear; and in 1205 there is a case of private bargain for hides between a lay-brother of Neath and one of Quincy".² Thus it is natural to find the Cistercian *Institutions* of [1240] enacting:

If in any abbey or grange of our Order wine is sold by the jug, let both the abbot, and others by whose precept and counsel this is done, be kept on bread and water until they have begged pardon for the deed at the next General Chapter. But those who, in cities or towns, have wine for sale by the jug, must so ordain that it be sold by such persons as may bring no scandal upon the Order; moreover, so long as a monk or lay-brother be present, let no gamblers or drinkers be admitted into the place.³

Cardinal Hugh of St-Cher [1250] preached against "the greed or love of private property among Religious", which prompted them to become not only traders, but in effect usurers.⁴ Friars, at the General Council of Vienne (1311), complained "that monks are too much entangled with secular businesses, contrary to their profession".⁵ Yet this, like so many similar relaxations, rather increased with time; so that one of the main points of reform prescribed to the Premonstratensian Order by the Chapter General of 1503 was "that the brethren should not sell wine in their monasteries".⁶

Voices from outside the cloister were even more frequent. Charles the Great [810] published a prohibition of trading [*turpe lucrum*] on the part of monks.⁷ Again at the Council of

¹ E. Martène, *Antiq. Mon. Rit.* (1764), p. 311, cc. 15, 16; *P.L.* cciv, col. 1146.

² *E.H.R.* (1934), XLIX, 327.

³ *Nomasticon Cisterciense*, p. 349.

⁴ Vol. iv, commentary on Lament. i, 7-8. See Appendix.

⁵ Pantin, I, 174.

⁶ Taiée, p. 171; Le Paige, p. 952.

⁷ *M.G.H. Leges Capit.* 1 (Boretius), 240.

Mainz (813) he decreed categorically "that monks shall abstain altogether *a negotiis saecularibus*". The Council of Paris (829) attacked clerical trading again.¹ The Greek emperors published similar prohibitions for their own dominions, laying special stress on the usurious nature of some of these business transactions.² The Council of London (1175) proclaimed "we prohibit, under pain of excommunication, that monks or clerics shall not trade for the sake of gain", appealing for confirmation to "the institutes of our fathers". This was incorporated in Canon Law (*Decret. Greg.* lib. III, tit. I, c. 6). So, again, was a similar decree of the Lateran Council of 1215 (*ibid.* lib. III, tit. i, c. 15) and another of Honorius III (*ibid.* c. 16). Thomassinus quotes similar conciliar decrees of 1260 (Cologne), 1267 (Pont-Audemer), 1268 (London), 1279 (Avignon), 1287 (Exeter), and 1536 (Cologne). St Charles Borromeo, a generation later, was still struggling against this abuse (Council of Milan), as were the Councils of Aachen in Germany and of Meaux in France. The civil authorities, also, dealt sometimes with this matter; large-scale trading by Religious was forbidden by Edward I in 1279 and 1302.³

For here, as so often elsewhere, self-interest bred subtle evasions of these emphatic and repeated decrees. Even among the Cistercians, before St Bernard's century was out, the monks began to disguise, under a pretence of "gift", those purchases of land which the strict puritanism of the *Carta Caritatis* had forbidden;⁴ and in other monastic records we frequently meet the same phenomenon. Here are the words of a strongly apologetic monastic historian. In the later thirteenth century, donations to the monasteries have not altogether ceased; but they more often resemble bargains. Charters begin as in the most glorious days of the Middle Ages "I make it known to all men that, without constraint or deception, but of mine own good will and of my certain knowledge, I have given and granted to these religious persons the abbot and convent of Acey, for the remedy of mine own soul and those of my predecessors." And, after that time-honoured formula, comes this: "Wherefore I acknowledge that the said lord abbot and

¹ Thomassinus, III, 524 (pars III, lib. iii, c. 19, §§ 1, 5).

² *Ibid.* §§ 6 ff. For these and similar prohibitions, see Raynaud, §§ 35, 37-50, 75, 77.

³ C.C.R. p. 124 and *Rot. Parl.* I, 157.

⁴ D'Arbois, pp. 293, 296-7.

his convent have given me...shillings of current coin, which I have taken and received from...in good coin and in full number, and I hold myself for well paid." What is this but an exchange or bargain? Yet nearly all the donations of that epoch are of this character. Let me quote at random.

And he gives four examples from 1275 to 1300.¹ So also writes the editor of a Breton chartulary:²

Since the lords were often short of ready money, the more thrifty monks sometimes obtained important estates from them by supplying a sum of money which was far below the value of the real property, but which the lords, considering their want of coin, accepted eagerly, and gave the rest willingly for their souls' salvation. Many liberal gifts to the Church in the Middle Ages, especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, are thus both sales and gifts.

And, coming to a specific case, he writes:

Here, it will be seen, although the language at first is that of "gift" (*dedit*), it is a pure sale [to the monks] and for a good price, the prince being in difficulties for want of money (*penuria coarctatus*). Therefore the notary, under pressure of the true facts, finally blurts out the exact word and calls the whole matter a "business", *negotium*.

Take, finally, the observations of the editor of the Molesme chartulary. He writes:

As early as the twelfth century, many sales are recorded under the form of gifts; perhaps we may even say that a multitude of donations, whose secret motives we cannot penetrate because payment is not specified, were only disguised sales...Nothing is more deceptive than a charter of "free gift" [*aumône*] of late twelfth or thirteenth-century date; men professed to be giving what they were really selling for hard cash down. This ambiguity is specially piquant in contracts of the thirteenth century; that is, of a time when the landed nobility, having impoverished itself and lost influence to the profit of the churches, is no longer anxious to enrich them by territorial benefactions.³

The editor of the Troarn chartulary makes the same observation (p. 129). So, again, Guérard in his preface to that of St-Père-de-Chartres (p. ccxxviii): "Many of the donations in favour of

¹ Blanchot, p. 110.

² A. de la Borderie, *Recueil d'actes* &c. (Rennes, 1888) 40, 55; cf. 62.

³ *Cart. Molesme*, Introd. p. 41. For fuller text see Appendix.

this abbey are, at bottom, nothing but disguised sales. . . . Men preferred that form [of a free gift], which seemed more meritorious in God's sight, and which, by colouring a contract with the tinge of almsgiving, avoided the idea of bargaining with the Saints."

The most natural infractions of strict Canon Law were those which seemed to follow most unavoidably from the abbey's position as possessor of great and scattered territories. Génestal (p. 165) has pointed out how Eudes Rigaud's *Register* clearly shows the monks selling their surplus corn and wine; and not only does this meet us everywhere in the records, but it might have been taken for granted *a priori*. The early Christian ideal of complete brotherly charity was unworkable here; if the lands or revenues were to be kept at all, they must be kept by business methods. We have seen how the appropriation system led almost inevitably to the sale of tithe-corn, and finally to the farming out of these tithes, with many of those chances of abuse which were notorious among the *publicani* of the Roman Empire. Again, though a small monastery might have creditors only among its immediate neighbours, so that mercy to well-known faces might go far to temper strict legality, yet the great abbeys were driven to measures as strict as those of any decent lay lord. At St-Bavon-de-Gand, about 1220, the procedure was definitely fixed.

The abbey had adopted a uniform course for collection of revenues, which had to be paid at the abbey itself. If, on the appointed day, the debtor was in default, he was fined three *sols*; and, when he appeared, he had a right to a meal and four *sols* if he paid, but to nothing in case of non-payment: in that case the abbot kept the right of condemning him to a fine and a pledge. These pledges were kept for this purpose during three days only. If that time of respite passed without payment of the debt, then the pledge was taken to the tribunal of Bocholt to declare the seizure as good and valid, after three proclamations by the crier on consecutive Sundays. If, before the term, the pledge was not redeemed, it became the property of the abbey; if it was redeemed before the third Sunday the debtor had to pay for its keep; e.g. four *sols* for a horse, two for a cow and a halfpenny for a sheep, every twenty-four hours.¹

¹ Van Lokeren, pt. 1, p. 93. I give in Appendix the severe strictures of Walter Map on monastic business methods: he had, however, a personal grudge.

Another piece of business, perfectly natural when we look into it though it may surprise us at first, is the monastic trade in liquor, which we have already glimpsed in that Premonstratensian prohibition. The Council of Rouen, in 1214, issued a decree which was in fact repeated from a similar decree of the Council of Paris in 1212. It runs:

Moreover, in the houses of clergy or the cloisters of Religious, or in churchyards or other religious places wherein wine is sometimes sold, we forbid that the authorities should permit dishonest banquetings or games of dice, or should receive any association of ribalds therein. Moreover, we firmly prohibit their doing the same by their authority in places without their cloister.¹

These laws shared the usual fate of legislation which has no definite sanction, and which many folk are tempted to infringe from different points of view. The Cistercian abbey of Loos earned the nickname of "the Pious Tavern".² Clerical inn-keeping flourished in Germany despite all conciliar prohibitions.³ At Bury St Edmunds, the great abbot William Curteys published statutes of reform in [1450]. One of them runs:

Considering that many evils and mischiefs and grievous detriments are generated to the abbey and to Ourselves and to our brethren by the fact that wine is exposed for sale within the abbey precincts, . . . therefore We ordain that no man offer wine for sale within the precincts of Our said abbey, nor sell wine either directly or through another person, under any colour or pretence whatsoever, under pain of the loss and confiscation of the wine thus exposed for sale. Of the wine thus lost and confiscated, We will and decree that the half go to Us or Our successors in the abbacy, and the other half for a pittance to the brethren; nor shall any remission be granted.⁴

Here, at least, was a sanction which many parties might be interested in applying against the offender; so the remedy was very likely effective at Bury. The Winchester monks dealt in wine on a great scale; but there is no evidence for their retailing it in the cloister.⁵

¹ Mansi, *Concilia*, xxii, cols. 823 § 16, 903. For the other cases, see Appendix.

² De Rosny, pp. 48, 82.

³ Hoyer, p. 31. In [1550] Helenenberg, being on a frequented road, made considerable profits by its wine-shop. In 1791, Eberhardshausen sold both wholesale and retail, and this was one of the main items of its "enormous income" of 30,450 thalers (*Eiflia Sacra*, i, 458, 620).

⁴ Dugdale-Caley, III, 114 n.

⁵ Kitchin, *Compotus Rolls*, pp. 6, 60.

For ale, there was apparently more indulgence. The Cistercian Bishop Otto of Freisingen (1146) granted to the monks of Weichenstephan the right of brewing beer and selling it within their precincts, or at their grange of Mark Wilting, without hindrance from any man.¹ Again, the monks of Kelso drove a brisk trade in ale.² On the other hand, it was natural that the Archbishop of York should prohibit this in a nunnery (1535): "*Item, we injoyne by thies presentes, that the prioressse suffer no ale house to be kept within the precinct of the gates of the saide monasterie.*"³ Similar cases, which might easily be multiplied, may be found in my Appendix. One of the most interesting occurs just as I am writing this (*The Times*, January 3, 1935). The Trappists (Reformed Cistercians) near Antwerp have sued a rival brewer who called his own brew "Trappist Beer", and thus infringed their trade-mark. The Antwerp Commercial Court has decided that a monk's business was to save souls and do charity, and that, though they might lawfully trade in order to swell their charitable funds, yet "it was inadmissible that such a community should place itself on the same footing as real traders".

In excuse for monastic wine-sellers on the Continent, we must remember the institution called *Wine-Ban*, which was often one of the feudal dues bound up with monastic endowments. This *ban* was a lord's monopoly of sale for a certain time, generally a few weeks, during which the lord sold at his own price, and so got the cream of the market. The extent to which this might develop is shown by an interesting German case. In 1414, the Dominican nuns of St Lambrecht in Rhenish Bavaria put themselves under protection of the Bishop of Speyer, and resigned to him in consequence certain of their feudal rights. On the other hand, they still retained the right of wine-ban:

for a fortnight at Christmas, another at Easter, and another at Whitsuntide, they might broach a tun [*Fuder*] of wine, at a price

¹ *Mon. Boica*, ix, 503.

² J. Haig, *Account of the Town of Kelso* (1825), p. 323, where details are given.

³ *Yorks Archaeol. Journal* (1902), xvi, 452. We may be reminded here of Chartreuse, Bénédictine, and other monastic liquors, and of the "Buckfast Tonic Wine" which may now be had of wine merchants, licensed grocers, and chemists, bearing "this Guarantee Trade Mark of the Monks of Buckfast Abbey" in Devonshire.

higher than the tavern-prices by a penny a quart [or gallon!]. If nobody came to drink the wine, then they had the right of carrying a *Viertel*¹ to each house in Grevenhausen, and, if it were not paid for, to distrain on the householder.

The archivist draws attention to the natural consequences of such a custom. By the middle of the century, the convent was so far decayed that the bishop was compelled to appeal to the Roman Court for its reform.² Allied to the wine-ban was that on bread, the lord's monopoly of the village oven (*four banal*). The abbey of St-Riquier, near Abbeville, as early as the ninth century, possessed the *fours banaux* of twelve different villages.³

A very significant case is recorded in the Papal Registers for the year 1420 from Scotland, where, however, social and religious life were less regular than in England, and where the clergy, for political and ecclesiastical reasons, were more directly dependent upon the pope. A formal petition rehearsed how one of the brethren of the Augustinian cathedral priory of St Andrews, with consent of the convent and of the bishop, prospected and dug for coal within the priory precincts, "at the expense of himself and his friends," under contract that he should receive half the resultant profits. The convent, in time, repented of a bargain which would give him all these profits in addition to the £12 a year which he could claim, as one of the brethren, "for his sustentation in food and dress". He therefore petitions that the pope should secure him a yearly pension of £40 for life, from which he can recoup his capital outlay and "remain for life in a university or other honest place of the said [Augustinian] Order without requiring a licence of his superior", and should permit him to hold, for life, the house which he has built for himself and a friendly parish vicar within the priory garden. The pope granted this petition, if it were found to be "for the evident utility of the church".⁴

Again, shopkeeping of every kind was sometimes carried on

¹ Probably equivalent to the medieval English *pottle* of two quarts (i.e. a half-gallon).

² F. X. Remling, *Abteien und Klöster in Rheinbayern* (1836), I, 153; see further in my *Medieval Village*, p. 59, and cf. H. Finke, *Dominikanerbriefe*, p. 105 and *Aurillac*, II, 55.

³ J. B. B. de Roquefort, *Vie privée des Français* (1815), I, 91. The index of my *Medieval Village* will guide to further details on this subject.

⁴ Cameron, *Supplications*, p. 222; full text in Appendix.

within the monastic precincts. Nuns, as will be seen later, constantly eked out their income by selling small objects of needlework. Archbishop Pecham, in his injunctions to Wherwell nunnery (1284), wrote: "*Item*, for reverence of God and for the decency of the Church, we lay a perpetual prohibition upon the licence given to merchants to sit in the church with their merchandize."¹ At Durham cathedral priory, between the chapter-house and the transept, there was "a place for the merchants to utter their wares".²

Another very curious and natural manifestation of the commercial spirit comes out in the bargains made with relatives of the main actor in an endowment. To a great extent, no doubt, these were due to the uncertainties of tenure and succession in those days, and therefore to the wisdom of satisfying everybody who might have any side-claim; but something, at least, must be attributed to the mentality of a society little accustomed to fixed prices. A clear instance of the first kind comes from the priory of Villedieu in 1072. The nephew of a donor, with his wife, "wished to dispute the donation; but, to stop these proceedings, [the monks] gave them 40 *sols tournois* and a psalter worth 10 *sols* which they demanded; and, finally, to four of their children 4 *deniers* each, in consideration of which they not only ratified their uncle's donation but added to it certain other lands beyond the river, for the monks to build mills and houses. It was thus" (continues Abbé Simon) "that the good monks managed to settle matters, and to give a little for the sake of a great gain. These little presents, made at the right time and place, were baits to obtain ratification from those who might have a right of challenge".³

Shortly afterwards [1140] when Suger redeemed one of his abbey domains from Ursellus the Jew, it was at the price of 150 *livres* to him and ten *livres* and ten bushels of wheat to his wife.⁴ At Molesme, one sister of a donor receives thirty *sols*; at other times, the gifts which secure consent are a horse, an ox, a pair of cows, 4 *livres* with a lambskin cloak, a hauberk worth 30 *livres*, or "a horse for Hugh my son, and an ounce of gold for Alice my wife".⁵ We may compare these with similar cases from Wales in [1120]. "For this grant [of land] the abbot gave

¹ *Epistolae*, R.S. p. 654.

³ *Vendôme*, III, 223.

⁵ *Cartulaire de Molesme*, I, 57.

² *Rites of Durham* (1902), p. 52.

⁴ Suger, *Œuvres*, p. 157.

20s. to the grantor, to his wife a bezant and two measures of beans, and to each of his sons red shoes." At about the same date, "the monks give 12 silver marks to [another] grantor to enable him to pay his debts; to each of his sons a *cappa*, or cloak, and 4 gold pieces, and undertake to receive him into their fraternity when he becomes infirm"¹. At Ourscamp, in 1165, the Cistercians bought land from a distinguished family, at the price of 40 marks, with forty sheep to the vendor's wife and two cows to his daughter.² Again, at Pipewell (thirteenth century), "the monks gave Andrew 15 marks, his son William 3 marks, Roger half a mark, and his wife a horse".³ Here, again, are later instances.

Donors might hope for a successful window, but to insure that they would get one was more difficult. In medieval times it was the custom in England to offer a reward to a glass-painter provided he had done a good job to the satisfaction of his patrons. But the French had a far more subtle method than this. They used to promise a new hat to his wife which she was to have if the work met with satisfaction. There was something of the wisdom of the serpent in this method. Cathedral authorities knew that window-making was a queer business which was carried on behind closed doors. That there was much faking going on is shown by the minute stipulation in contracts that paint was to be fired on and not merely fixed with varnish. But the wife was one who was up to all the tricks of the trade, and by bribing apprentices with cakes and ale from the pantry she could find out exactly how things were going on. Long before the job had been well begun she would have selected in the milliner's window round the corner the particular piece of finery she intended to have, and all day long and perhaps for half the night her wretched husband would be constantly reminded of the wrath to come if any fault was found with his work and his unappreciated helpmeet was thereby deprived of her woman's rights.⁴

¹ *Margam*, pp. 33, 77.

² *Cart. Ourscamp*, p. 387.

³ Dugdale-Caley, v, 432.

⁴ "Curiosities of Glass-Painting", by John A. Knowles, F.S.A., in *Stained Glass* (1933), xxviii, 147. Mr Knowles adds in a footnote: "In 1476 it was stated in a dispute between the Prior of the Carmelite House of Tours and Jehan de Paris, the glass-painter, that there was a sum of fourteen gold crowns still owing plus four 'to the wife of the said Jehan de Paris for a hat' (Jehan Perreal dit Jehan de Paris, M. Dufay, *Mémoires de la Société Littéraire de Lyon*, 1869). In 1500 the Chapter of the Cathedral of Sens paid 'to the wife of Lyevein the glass-painter, an escu d'or for a hat since he has made the stained-glass window of the Tree of Jesse well'. Otin, *Le Vitrail*, p. 321."

This practice led sometimes to still more curious developments. Here is a charter from the Cistercian abbey of Bonport on the Seine. In 1250,

Alice, wife of Ralph Saudubruil, then (as she asserted) a parishioner of St-Maclou at Rouen, with the assent and will of her husband, then present, acknowledged that she had sold, and had totally abandoned to the abbot and convent of Bonport, . . . a certain tenement of wood and stone which she claimed to possess in that same parish . . . for thirty one pounds of Tours, and for ten shillings of Tours to buy a certain wimple for the said Alice to wear.¹

Readers may be reminded of the friar's knives and pins in Chaucer's *Prologue*. Here, again, is a German case. In 1384, Johann v. Schwarzenberg sold his estate at Cruft to the Benedictines of Laach for 320 Gulden.

An interesting item in the deed is that the seller promises to persuade his wife, Catharine, so soon as she shall come of age, to give up all her rights in that property; and (so runs the document), if she will not, then he shall ride off straightway to Coblenz with a servant and two horses, until she has consented to the renunciation.²

Another practice which we, like the Vendôme historian, may class with "baits", was that of godparentage. This, in the Middle Ages, formed a far closer tie than nowadays. One of the strongest terms of intimacy was that of *gossip*, or God-relation, and a couple who had stood as godparents to the same child had thus put themselves within the prohibited degrees; no marriage was possible between them unless they could buy a dispensation. Therefore the monk, and especially the head of a monastery, was under special temptation to make friends for himself or his house by godparentage to rich or noble children. This was as constantly prohibited as trade, yet almost as frequently practised. St Gregory the Great condemned it sternly in [600], because it tended to bring women into monasteries for social intercourse; and this prohibition was incorporated in Canon Law.³ Again, in 817, the great Council of Aachen decreed "let monks not stand godfathers with men or women, nor let them kiss women"

¹ *Cart. de Bonport* (Évreux, 1862), p. 185.

² *Eiflia Sacra*, I, 739.

³ Gratian, *Decretum*, pars II, causa xviii, q. 2, c. 20.

(§ 16). So also a much later glossator explains the papal prohibition from the fact that, in some parts "godfathers were wont to kiss godmothers, which may be excusable among secular folk,



Bishop and King at baptism.

but not among Religious".¹ In 1435 the Synod of Strassburg decreed:

Willing to extirpate that vice of greed which we know to be fostered by godfathership, and to provide for the indemnities of monasteries, we strictly forbid all abbots, abbesses, and superiors of any monastery whatever, to become godparents of any children; or

¹ J. Paltz, *Celifodina*, fol. xl a. For the frequency and moral dangers of such baptismal relations among Religious, see Alvarus Pelagius, *De Planctu Ecclesiae*, lib. II, art. xxiv, § 3.

if, at the pressure of some reasonable cause, they do so, then let nothing be given or paid on that account, then or afterwards, by them or by others, under pain of strictest excommunication.

Episcopal visitors repeated similar prohibitions; yet the practice flourished behind their backs. Barbara Mason, ex-prioress of Masham, by her will in 1538 bequeathed legacies to two god-daughters; and the Abbot of Tewkesbury was godfather to the Lady Anne Beauchamp.¹

For here, as almost everywhere, not only could the law be silently broken but express dispensations could be bought or procured through family influence. The Cistercian records are very significant here. The French version of the *Institutions of the General Chapter* dates apparently from about 1230; this has a plain prohibition of sponsorship on the part of abbots, such as might be expected in face of the plain words of St Gregory in the *Corpus* of Canon Law.² But the recension of these statutes in 1256 has two notable changes; by this time there is evident fear lest monks also should transgress, and a severe penalty is added. It runs:

Any abbot or monk who shall presume to baptize an infant, or to stand sponsor for it (except perchance at the point of death, in the absence of a priest), shall fast every Friday until the next General Chapter upon bread and water, unless some great solemnity or evident sickness demand some dispensation [from such fast]; and the abbot shall [publicly] beseech pardon for this at that same Chapter. Let an abbot suffer the same penalty if he bless a nun or a bell, or even priestly vestments.

But to this a later hand has added in the margin: "All these things are done now, either by custom or by privilege."³ And at least one version of the Cistercian Institutes which has survived in England, having a few additions posterior to 1256, helps to explain how easily these "customs" and "privileges" were created. There, the abbot or monk is to be punished for standing sponsor to a child "unless the request be made by a person such that it cannot be refused without heavy damage and scandal"—in other words, by some rich or powerful layman, since, *ex*

¹ *Bury Wills and Inventories*, C.S. p. 134; Dugdale-Caley, II, 63. See also Winter, *Prämonst.* p. 271; *Ann. Colmar*, p. 266; Dugdale-Caley, v, 661.

² Guignard, *Mon. primitifs*, p. 558.

³ *Nomast. Cist.* p. 292, § 8.

hypothesi, even the most solemn prelate would have no child to be baptized.¹ With that to guide us, we may easily understand this later case from Bordeaux. In 1419 the abbot of Ste-Croix, whose monastery had suffered heavily in the wars, pleaded for a papal dispensation. He began: "Seeing that the favour of nobles and of other powerful folk is most necessary and opportune to the said monks for the preservation of their rights; seeing also that, in these parts, close friendships are contracted between those who stand as godparents and the parents of the children"; and he continues with the petition that, in spite of the standing ecclesiastical prohibition, a dispensation may be granted to him to stand godfather to forty children of either sex. The answer was laconic "so be it for four"—*fiat de quattuor*. We need not wonder, therefore, that medieval preachers sometimes satirized the monk who thus threw out baits for endowments. His hospitality distinguishes clearly between the rich man who is likely to give again, and the poor from whom nothing is to be expected.

Another time, some Christian has a slight indisposition: he is rich, powerful, with great ancestors: at once they all visit him, console him and overwhelm him with attentions.... A poet has said truly: let a rich man be indisposed, let him have but a slight fever, and a regiment of monks hastens to his room: let a poor man fall sick even unto death, there is no hope of booty and he passes unnoticed.²

St Bernard, as we shall presently see, recognized the danger of association with rich outsiders;³ so also did the author of the early Franciscan *Sacrum Commercium*, "The Converse of St Francis with Holy Poverty".⁴ After them, again, St Bonaventura recognized spiritual dangers here, and defended on that ground the Franciscan custom of transferring friars frequently from one district to another, like the modern Wesleyan preachers.⁵ For Gascoigne [1450] one of the worst abuses of the time was the purchase of great men's favour by hospitality or gifts be-

¹ *Yorks Arch. Journ.* (1890), XI, 24.

² Abbé Bourgain, *La chaire française au XII siècle* (1879), p. 336.

³ *P.L.* CLXXXIII, col. 85.

⁴ *Temple Classics*, p. 24.

⁵ *Libellus Apologeticus*, q. 373: "For, if they had to remain long in one place, some would contract too great friendship with powerful folk, and with women, and would procure bodily comforts and build costly edifices"—as in fact the friars of later generations did.

stowed from the endowments which monasteries held in trust for the poor.¹

The monks' position as capitalists led them not infrequently into other commercial methods which, however natural at that time, will seem to us still less in harmony with their profession. The medieval system of wardship differed widely from the modern. When children under age, by the death of their father, were left in the hands of the overlord, it was the regular and recognized custom to make a profit from the business. The wardships and marriages of rich children, like the war-ransoms of rich warriors, were bought and sold by noble speculators;² and in this matter abbots did not fall behind their fellow-barons. The Malmesbury monks, like other lords, drove a brisk trade in buying and selling the marriages of wards who were left to their legal guardianship.³ And, in 1361, the prior of a dependent cell violated in this matter not only a churchman's conscience but even the not too refined law of his day. He bought a royal ward, evidently wealthy, at second-hand, and dealt with him after a fashion which attracted the animadversion of the royal officers, who ordered an enquiry on the spot. "By that inquisition it is found that the heir was married by the said Simon to Denise daughter of the said prior, begotten by an handmaid (*ancilla*) after the prior was a monk and professed in Malmesbury abbey, and that the heir is of the age of ten years and more, and the woman of the age of twelve years and more."⁴ Thus the prior had "disparaged" his ward, not necessarily by marrying him to his own daughter, but because that daughter was "of villein blood"; and this action brought him within the compass of the Statute of Merton, by which the offender forfeited his wardship.⁵

The buying and selling of serfs, again, I have treated elsewhere.⁶ The ancient formularies are very significant in this

¹ *Lib. Ver.* 72, 115, 222.

² Compare my *Chaucer and his England*, pp. 198, 200, 233; also H. S. Bennett, *The Pastons and their England* (Cambridge, 1921), pp. 33, 75.

³ *Reg. Malm.* R.S. II, 191 (5th Hen. III). See similar entries under the years 1282 and 1283 (*Ric. le Bret.*).

⁴ This, again, was illegal; a marriage was valid, by mere consent of both parties, provided that the girl were at least twelve, but the boy must be at least thirteen. See *Chaucer and his England*, pp. 206-7.

⁵ *C.P.R.* (1358), p. 582. For full text see Appendix.

⁶ *Medieval Village*, pp. 13, 15-16, 86, 110, 147, 331 n., and ch. XIII *passim*.

connexion. Bignon's collection (about A.D. 700) is evidently for purely monastic use. It contains a legal formula for buying serfs, and another for selling serfs, but none for manumission. Sirmond's and Lindenbrog's collections, on the other hand, contain manumissions as well as sales, but these collections are not purely monastic, and the preambles to the manumissions show plainly that it is an individual, not a monastery, which is freeing the serf in question.¹

Finally, the trading spirit too often brought with it the tricks of trade. The records of medieval litigation are not infrequently very unfavourable to the monasteries. For example, there was much smuggling, direct or indirect, in the fifteenth-century English wool-trade. "For those who wished to be a little more respectable in their methods of evading the law, the expedient was open of smuggling their wool out of lonely places in Lancashire to Dublin, and having it coketted there at the convenient cost of 2*d.* the stone, a practice which the Abbot of Furness is alleged by the Staple to have introduced."² And, again, they are frequently accused of taking an ell when they had been granted an inch. Here is a French instance. In 1345 an enquiry was made at Rouen by "the masters and *enquêteurs* of waters and forests for our king and the duke of Normandy". These brought heavy and detailed accusations against the abbey of St-Ouen: that, for some time past, it had illegitimately made large sums under cover of the limited forest-rights which it had by grant from early dukes, by selling wood where it had no legal claim to take any except for its own consumption. The abbey chronicler does what he can to rebut those accusations; but, after long discussion in different courts, the abbey was finally condemned to pay 10,000 florins. The monks had fourteen foresters whose only work was "to guard the said woods".³

We need not wonder, therefore, that fervent churchmen in all ages combated this materialism. St Jerome says, writing to his pupil Nepotianus: "Flee from the trading cleric, who riseth from want unto wealth and from base birth unto pride, as thou wouldst flee from a pestilence." And to Rusticus, another pupil:

¹ Migne, *P.L.* LXXXVII, cols. 743-831.

² A. S. Walker, "Illustrations of Medieval Commercial Morality", *History*, 1921, p. 107.

³ *Chronique de St-Ouen*, pp. 48-90.

"Many [monks] cannot live without the handicrafts and tradings of their early days; and, without the name of shopkeepers they practise the same activities.... Nowadays, under the name of Religion, men busy themselves with unjust commerce, and the honour of the Christian name prefers committing fraud to suffering fraud."¹ Raynaud (pp. 68ff.) quotes the reprobation expressed by different medieval writers for the general worldly activities of clergy, without distinction between Regular and Secular.² Peter the Venerable [1120], though he was no Puritan extremist, wrote as strongly as any other: "Thus this professed solitary spends his life in the midst of the world; this cell-bound cloisterer runs up and down where crowds are thickest, and wanders as an anxious trader through markets and lanes. Rest becomes a torment to him, sitting a labour, silence a pain, and claustration a hell": he is like Samson bound to his millstone.³ Hugh of St-Victor [1120] writes "There is no kind of dishonesty in which the Monastic Order is not involved." Peter of Blois [1160] wrote a whole letter of expostulation (No. 17) *To a Trading Cleric*. Cardinal Hugh of St-Cher [1250]: "Certain monks have marketplaces to sell their corn and wool and other things, and from such places, literally, there departeth not usury and deceit" (*Opera*, II, 140-2, commenting on Ps. liv, 12, *Vulg.*). His contemporary Nicolas de Byard, in his bulky theological dictionary, writes so racily that he may here be quoted in full:

Thus many [Religious] grant to the devil that their soul should be a market-place of chaffering, for they think of and attend to nothing but temporal things. These have left the world in body, but stick there in soul: their body is in choir, and their heart in the market.⁴... Such have the outward likeness of a monk, but not the truth thereof, even as Saul's messengers thought to find David in his bed (to wit the monk in his cloister); yet they found naught but an image and a goat-skin (to wit, a monk's cowl).⁵

¹ *Epp.* 52, 125 (*P.L.* XXII, cols. 531, 1082). In the second passage, some MSS. read not *commercia* but *compendia*, "profits".

² For fuller text of all these next quotations, see Appendix.

³ *Ep.* lib. I, No. 20; *P.L.* CLXXXIX, col. 94.

⁴ Compare abbot Gilles li Muisis [1350] "His [the monk's] body is in the minster, and his heart is in the market" (*Poésies*, I, 146).

⁵ *Dictionarius Pauperum*, s.v. *Religio*, c. 99 (Paris, Regnault (1512), f. 89), *Corpus est in choro, cor in foro*. The reference is to 1 Kings xix, 16, *Vulg.* (*A.V.* 1 Samuel).

Bromyard [1400] specifies this as one cause of monastic unpopularity and decay: "the monks are public traders"; freedom from tolls was first granted to them in the interests of public service, and now they exploit this for their private profit. In another place he complains how these Knights of the Holy Spirit are degenerate: "some turn to trading and others to hunting".¹ Dionysius Cartusianus [1420] complains of Religious who, although competently endowed, drift away from their profession to become buyers and sellers.

But the most interesting comments are those that come either from or concerning the Cistercians, who, like other strict reformers, had at first reacted violently against that landlordism and commercialism into which the great old abbeys had drifted. St Bernard, preaching against all unfaithfulness to primitive simplicity, seems to include even his own Order—for he lived to see great Cistercian buildings rising everywhere around him. He writes:

I see (and grieve the more) some who, after spurning the pomp of this world, are prone to learn rather pride in this school of humility. . . . I see others also who, after they have joined the army of Christ, are again implicated in worldly business. With great care they erect walls [*muros*] and neglect morals [*mores*]; under pretext of the common profit they sell their words [as advocates] to rich men and their salutations to ladies.²

Yet, within a few years, the Cistercians became the greatest of monastic traders. We know it from the general popular outcry. Giraldus Cambrensis, who is bitterly eloquent on this subject, must be considerably discounted as a personal enemy. But Peter of Blois deserves far more careful consideration; and he, while expressly witnessing to their earlier virtues, rebukes the abbots and monks of Cîteaux very plainly for their departure from that ideal less than a generation after St Bernard's death.³ Indeed, we have incidental evidence even from St Bernard's lifetime. William, Count of Montpellier, by his will made in 1146, took almost as stringent precautions against the encroach-

¹ "Among the causes of the unpopularity of the religious houses with the commercial classes was their rivalry in trade" (Leadam, in *Star Chamber* (SS.), II, xciii. This is *à propos* of the quarrel between the Priors of Tynemouth, as coal merchants, and the citizens of Newcastle from 1298 to 1512).

² *Hom. IV super Missus Est*, § 40 (*P.L.* CLXXXIII, col. 85).

³ *Ep.* 82.

ments of Cistercians after his death, as against Jews.¹ Similarly, the commons of Lincolnshire complained to the king, in 1302, that the Cistercians drove a wool-trade not only in the produce of their own sheep, but also by sending their lay-brethren about the country to buy cheap and sell dear.² Indeed, their own records show them as merchants on an enormous scale; it may be said without exaggeration, as part-founders of modern capitalism.³ This was one of the themes dwelt upon by the Cistercian Abbot Justus [1300] in a sermon to his assembled fellow-abbots:

We immerse ourselves, of our own accord, in courts of kings and pontiffs, in city business and in trading... We had turned our faces, as if in contempt, away from the face of the world; yet now, as it were, we embrace the world all the more warmly from behind. Clergy and layfolk cast a cunning eye upon all these things, and are scandalized at us and speak in detraction of us.

He ended his sermon with the usual ascription and *Amen*, to which the record adds, "there were few abbots and bishops who echoed this *Amen*; for their eyes were heavy with indignation, and they knew not what to answer. Then said Justus 'Better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy'".⁴ In so far as Cistercian trade declined before the

¹ D'Achery, *Spicilegium*, ed. de la Barre (1723), III, 500.

² *Rot. Parl.* I, 156-7. So, again, a statute of 1530 forbade the clergy to embark in business in order to pacify the irritation which the laity felt at their competition (Savine, p. 121).

³ Compare L. F. Salzman, *English Trade in the M. Ages*, p. 285; and especially H. M. Robertson, *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism* (Camb. Univ. Press, 1933), p. 52: "It would take too long to follow out the actual history of these various medieval capitalistic developments. It should be noted that the Catholic Church was itself largely responsible for some of them. The industrial and agricultural activities of the Cistercians in the end necessitated complex capitalistic arrangements for the sale of wool. The abbeys used to act as mortgage banks. And the Roman curia was an enormous financial organization collecting taxation from all parts of the Christian world, served by a galaxy of important banks and money-changers. These *campsores Romanam curiam sequentes* must not be forgotten as weighty influences on the history of capitalism." Detailed evidence concerning these licensed papal usurers may be found in W. E. Lunt, *Papal Revenues, etc.*, I, 51 ff., 301 ff.; also in Dr Annie Cameron, *The Apostolic Camera, etc.*, pp. 29-35 and 79. We have also the complaints of medieval churchmen such as Matthew Paris (III, 108), and abbot Gilles li Muisis [1350], who writes: "The usurers, who, as men say, are the Pope's merchants" (*Œuvres*, II, 73).

⁴ De la Bigne, *Maxima Bibliotheca Patrum* (1618), XIV, 1-3. The quotation is from Proverbs xxvii, 6.

Reformation, this was only through mismanagement and decay: there was no abatement of the struggle for money. Professor Savine (p. 125) infers from the *Valor* that "the monks in the sixteenth century occupied but a modest place in the national industry, and were rather *rentiers* living on their revenues. The entries...respecting trade enterprises suggest the same ideas". But More's *Utopia* is conclusive as to their still keeping up the wool-trade, sometimes to the grievous loss of the peasantry; and Gascoigne [1450] bears witness to their commercial spirit. He writes:

The Cistercian monks have by privilege—or by papal licence, which is the same thing—the tithes of certain fields; and now that licence is so stretched and abused that in certain parishes the priest can scarce get a livelihood from the parish; and in certain places nearly all the monks are great traders and have many private possessions in the hands of layfolk...O! what good might be done by a good pope who should send a good legate (one who gapeth not after gifts but after the salvation of souls) with powers sufficient for the reform of churches and realms!¹

Very similar is the history of other reformed Orders which had once been as self-denying as St Bernard's: for instance, the Gilbertines. Dr Graham's study of the account rolls of the Gilbertine house of Malton in Yorkshire shows that more than half their income in [1260] came from trade in wool, despite the prohibitions of two papal legates at different times, and of the Gilbertine General Chapter itself. Under cover of the privileges exempting them from taxation, they were able not only to sell at an advantage over lay competitors in the different markets, but also to escape income-tax on their enormous profits. Dr Graham comments: "As the gains of the wool-trade were so large, it is easy to understand how futile it was to attempt to check it as a matter of ecclesiastical discipline, especially when exercised through the Papacy. It would have been necessary to effect radical changes in the expenditure of the house."²

Here, as usual, some of the most remarkable instances come from continental countries, where good and evil were more fully developed than in England. The Cistercians of Zwetl in Austria,

¹ *Lib. Ver.* p. 197.

² *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.* (1904), p. 150.

about 1311, had 2000 sheep in one single grange.¹ The German abbeys commonly possessed houses in one or more of the Free Cities of the Empire which became regular trading-colonies.

In Esslingen alone, five Württemberg convents possessed granges, or at least houses and barns: viz. Adelberg, Bebenhausen, Blaubeuren, Denkendorf, Lorch and the nunnery of Weil... Buying and selling of superfluous products was one of the main reasons for these conventual settlements in the Imperial Cities. It only depended how many advantages and comforts the citizens granted them, whether freely or by bargain, or by command of the Emperor himself. Rudolph, in 1275, gave the Herrenalb grange at Weil freedom from all toll and taxes, with the consent of the town itself. Less favourable seem the citizens of Esslingen, Ulm and Reutlingen to have been towards Bebenhausen; for it was necessary more than once to warn these cities very seriously to spare that convent every kind of impost and burden, to lay no obstacles in the way of its trade and intercourse, and to grant it full freedom of the city; a command which was repeated as late as 1415 by Kaiser Sigismund. The liberties which this convent enjoyed in Ulm, and its dealings there, are described by a chronicler of that city, whom we can the more readily believe because the end of this glory perhaps fell in the days which many still surviving citizens of Ulm could remember. Not only the monks of Reichenau, says Felix Faber, but also the Cistercians of Bebenhausen did great violence in Ulm by means of their privileges. They built a little convent in the city, St George's church with lodgings attached for the monks; and in this convent they had a great cellar with rich store of wine. Two casks were always on the tap there, and the town had no profit whatsoever from the wine that was sold there; for the monks had full freedom of entry and of sale for their wine. No citizen bought wine except in this cellar, and even the innkeepers supplied themselves from thence. The citizens first bought from these Bebenhausen monks their whole buildings and rights, and then pulled down all but St George's church, which in our day (Felix wrote about 1490) belongs to the Dukes of Württemberg, who bought the advowson from the monks; and at last the burghers forced the monks to leave the city altogether.²

In Rhineland there was competition and strife between the nunneries and the weavers' gilds.³

¹ *Zwetl*, p. 542.

² D. F. Cless, *Landes- und Culturgesch. v. Württemberg*, Th. II, Abt. i, S. 357. Cless goes on to describe the still greater rights enjoyed in Ulm by the monks of Reichenau, and the misunderstandings to which similar privileges led in Esslingen and elsewhere.

³ Boos, III, 89-90.

Post-Reformation history tells the same tale. Monastic trading formed an occasional grievance, at least, in France down to the Revolution; and in present-day Spain it has formed one of the main subjects of Church reform which have occupied the Cortes.¹

¹ See Appendix.

CHAPTER XVI

BANKING AND INDULGENCES

ONE field of monastic trade deserves a section to itself: viz. banking. It has sometimes been assumed that this was as altruistic as the Mont-de-Piété system; but recent research has abundantly proved that, frequently at least and probably nearly always, it was a definite source of profit, whether directly or indirectly. Even when the monastery, like the modern bank, allowed well-to-do folk to leave their valuables in its strong boxes, it reaped its natural and legitimate reward in the good-will of the influential classes. Caesarius of Heisterbach has a picturesque and suggestive story in this connexion.

A certain usurer committed to a cellarer of our [Cistercian] Order a certain sum of money for safe keeping. The cellarer sealed it up and laid it in a safe place side by side with the abbey's money. When, afterwards, the usurer asked for his deposit, the cellarer unlocked the chest and found neither that money nor his own. When he found that the locks were intact, and the seals on the money-bags unbroken, so that there was no suspicion of theft, then he knew that the usurer's money had devoured that of the monastery. From which we may see that the substance of a monastery is not increased but diminished by endowments from usury.¹

The fullest and most recent study is that of Professor R. Génestal,² who confines himself almost altogether to Normandy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; *i.e.* the last two great centuries of monastic wealth.

Usury was forbidden by the Church; and the original Church definition of usury was the taking of any interest, or any payment beyond the restitution of the bare sum lent. Indeed, that strict definition, in places at least, survived all the elaborate distinctions of St Thomas and the scholastics; at least one mission-preacher of the early sixteenth century may be found using it. Moreover, even St Thomas Aquinas's regulations on this subject, which became classical for the rest of the Middle Ages and beyond, do

¹ *Dial. Mirac.* 1, 108.

² *Rôle des monastères comme établissements de crédit* (1901). See excellent summary in *Vierteljahrschrift für Social- und Wirtschaftsgesch.* (1903), 1, 157.

in one most important respect flatly contradict a papal decretal embodied in Canon Law only a few years before Aquinas wrote.¹ The plain facts are rehearsed by the greatest of the early Dante commentators, Benvenuto da Imola, professor at Bologna in [1370]: "He who taketh usury goeth to hell; and he who taketh it not liveth on the verge of beggary."² The earliest recorded instance of mortgage is at the end of the tenth century; but the practice probably dates from a good deal earlier; and, although it was obviously contrary to earlier Canon Law, yet it was not explicitly forbidden by any pope before Alexander III (1159-81); and, even then, it was not difficult to evade the prohibition by legal fictions (p. 3). Yet it did in fact create a real impression, especially upon the monasteries. The story, therefore, falls into two periods, before and after Alexander III.

In the first, or mortgage period, the borrowers were almost always nobles or wealthy folk in temporary need of money (pp. 32, 70). In proof of the thorough business spirit in which the monks regarded these transactions, we have the fact that they constantly show themselves unwilling to be repaid too soon. To receive the capital back, with the automatic cessation of interest, within a few months or even a year or two, was scarcely worth the while of a business man; we therefore find contracts in which the lenders expressly exclude repayment until 2 or 3 years have elapsed, or 6; more often 9, or 15, or 18; oftenest of all 21 (pp. 41, 72). Moreover, by Roman law the mortgager might foreclose after the lapse of 30 years; and, since the usual practice was to lend a sum not exceeding two-thirds of the real value (sometimes even less), it was a great advantage to the lender to prolong to this term (pp. 45-6, 59-60, 71). So long as the loan lasted, he received about 15 per cent., and he had the security of a pledge which could be sold at a higher price than the sum lent (pp. 61, 70). These mortgages, therefore, were made to meet temporary distress on the borrower's part:

in the few charters which are more explicit than the rest, two sorts of motives are indicated, either the borrower's pecuniary embarrassment or his departure for a distant expedition (p. 63).

¹ See *History* (1921), VI, 71. My page references are to Génestal.

² *Comentum*, ed. Lacaite, I, 579. And a few pages earlier (p. 575) "Usury hath taken refuge in our days among money-changers, merchants and artificers; nay (shameful to relate), even among prelates, priests and Religious."

Like all loans of this kind, it is extremely dangerous to the borrower. Receiving only a part of the value for the land which he pledges, he runs the risk of losing that land, irrecoverably, if he has miscalculated; if the receipts upon which he had reckoned for repayment fail. Then he must regret that he had not sold his property outright (p. 65).

In many cases it must have been "an effective means of hastening ruin"; as when

Acelinus de Calegio "under pressure of excessive necessity" entered into a contract and, finding himself unable to pay, took the cowl [at Mont-St-Michel] and abandoned his property to the abbey (p. 67).

Many of the borrowers are men on the point of starting for the Crusades; and no peasant in that position would have lands to pledge: the land belonged to his lord (p. 68). Moreover, the statistics of these mortgages show us that the loan was seldom below 5 *livres*, and at least half were of 10 *livres* or more (pp. 56, 69). Thus "The conclusion is that the mortgage system served only for the rich, and only for men who were borrowing for consumption" (p. 70). And, with the law of foreclosure in prospect, the monks naturally looked upon the system "less as a temporary investment than as a means for acquiring real property on favourable terms". For instance,

a husband pledged, without his wife's consent, a share in a church which had been assigned to her earlier as dowry; the lady having become a widow, claimed her property from the mortgagee, the abbey of Mont-St-Michel. The monks, seeing a coveted property escaping from their grasp, which they had hoped to make their own some day, offered to buy from the son of the dead borrower, when his mother should be dead. He, then, finally consented to the sale, "overcome" [as he confessed] "by the price and for the prayers which they say assiduously for my progenitor, and whereof I should deprive him if I acted otherwise" (p. 74).

Thus . . .

everything concurred to make the mortgage system a means of acquisition for the monks. . . . Indeed, at that time, the purchase of land was . . . the only durable investment; and the monks were anxious above all for durable investments. Was not the inalienability of their property a principle of their management? What had once come into the abbey patrimony must never leave it (pp. 76-7).

This mortgage then, so dangerous for the borrower as being a "loan of consumption", was one of the least defensible forms of taking interest. The early prohibition of usury could indeed no longer be maintained in its strictness; but at least the line ought to be drawn short of this. Even layfolk who had taken mortgages sometimes regretted it as fatal to their souls.¹ Therefore, after more than a century of growing popularity, it was natural that the system should attract the attention of a great papal legislator like Alexander III, who, at the Council of Tours (1163), forbade it.

"Many clerics" (he said) "and (we grieve to say) even of those clergy who by their oath and by their habit have left this world, although they shrink from the common usuries as a practice more openly condemned, yet lend money to persons in want, receiving in pledge their possessions and taking, as an increase to the capital, the revenues that accrue therefrom."

This practice must cease; any offender is to be deposed from his office, and the borrower, when he repays, may deduct from the loan all the interest which he has paid to the lender. This strict prohibition was slightly modified afterwards; but the gist of it remained firm.

The sanction here was clear and easy: a debtor whom Church law authorized to deduct all the interest was evidently in a very strong position. Layfolk might openly defy the decree; but it was difficult for clerics to do so (pp. 82-4). One abbey, indeed, can be shown to have defied the law openly, by compelling the debtor to acknowledge in his contract: "I do specially renounce those laws and decrees and decretals which prescribe that the capital shall be diminished by the revenues received through the pledge" (p. 81). The prohibition might also be evaded obliquely by drawing up a fraudulent contract (p. 80, cf. p. 18). But in Normandy Génestal has found scarcely any example either of defiance or of fraud; the end of the twelfth century does practically mark the end of monastic mortgages (p. 78). This is due not only to obedience, but to the fact that there now "existed a new way of investment for monastic capital, that of rent-charges, which had many advantages over the old mortgage

¹ See the case quoted by Génestal from Ordericus Vitalis, bk. viii, ch. 17, written in 1133-4.

system" (p. 85). By this system, a lender who wanted 10 per cent. (let us say) for his money would "place" £100 upon a certain piece of land, or a certain house, on the understanding that £10 of the profits of that land or house should come yearly to him. Thus "this rent-charge is for the creditor a pecuniary investment and for the debtor a loan for an indefinite period". This system was still suspect of usury—it would more certainly have been so condemned at an earlier period—as late as [1240], when the future Pope Innocent IV advised Christians to abstain from creating fresh rent-charges, although he allowed them to buy those which were already constituted; for of course such a charge might be bought and sold like a modern company share (p. 90). From the middle of the thirteenth century, however, we find the practice common in monasteries; and, in fact, all through the later medieval generations it was the commonest form of investment; its Latin name, *census*, has impressed itself upon the German language, in which *Zins* is the regular word for *interest*. As Génestal says, "everything concurred to make rent-purchases the normal investment for Religious" (p. 175; cf. Imbart de la Tour, I, 360). At first, it was insisted that the only way of avoiding usury was to arrange the matter by a regular sale; and so learned and practical a man as Johann Busch could still insist upon this in [1450].¹ But the declarations of Martin V (1425) and Calixtus III (1455), made in face of the facts that by that time a very large proportion of ecclesiastical investments were in rent-charges, and that heretics were beginning to refuse payment of an interest which they pleaded to be usurious, asserted definitely the legality of the system.²

Génestal's researches have shown that we cannot take simply at their face value the records of monastic debts from the thirteenth century onwards. Their property was locked up, mainly in land. Therefore every great expense (e.g. a new building) necessarily upset the budget for a time; and, with the waning popularity of the monks, that overdraft might prove

¹ *Lib. Ref.* p. 732. This forms a notable exception to Ashley's generalization that "the canonist theory put no obstacle in the way" of the rent-charge system (*Econom. Hist.* I, pt. ii, p. 410).

² Ashley, p. 409; *Extravagantes Communes*, De Emptione et Venditione, cap. 1 and 2. An interesting description of the stages by which rent-charges finally became legalized is contained in a pamphlet by J. B. Pearson, *The Theories on Usury* (Cambridge, 1876).

finally irremediable. Yet their resources were so great, at least down to the end of the thirteenth century, that a few years of wise administration balanced the budget. Hence the apparent contradiction that an apparently bankrupt abbey could still be buying rent-charges, as the documents sometimes prove (pp. 161 ff.).

We must recognize, then, that banking grew up in the monasteries as naturally as it grew up among the merchants outside. Henry of Ghent in [1280] does indeed take the old strict view of the census-system as usurious. He writes: "As to what men argue to the contrary, that holy Religious advise religious women such as béguines to buy such rents, I say and firmly believe that, if they give such counsel, they are therein unwise; they are deceived by their ignorance of natural law in usurious contracts, and thus they deceive others."¹ But such rigorists were swept away by the tide: they were hopelessly out of date. The monks of St-Martin-des-Champs had been lending money on exactly the same terms as an ordinary banker in about 1070.² Lamprecht, in a passage which Lord Acton pencilled in his own copy of the book, wrote of "the free and easy way in which business was done at Cluny... the bank-business of St-André was managed by Jewish financiers in the service of the abbey".³ Thomassinus points out that monks, as well as other clergy, were sometimes involved in those practices of speculative buying or selling which Canon Law condemned as usurious.⁴ In about 1230 we find the abbey of St-Bavon buying and selling tithes from the parish clergy, just as stocks are bought and sold in our own day. A few years later they are acting as bankers and lending money on the security of tithes.⁵ Nor can we ignore the influence in this field of their borrowings, apart from their lendings. The Benedictine chronicler Oxenedes bitterly resented the fact that "usury, which is forbidden in both Testaments, is now practised almost as a lawful trade by those usurers of the Roman Pontiff who are called 'merchants'".

¹ Quoted by Pearson, p. 82.

² *Lib. Test.* p. 99.

³ *Beiträge*, p. 140; see Appendix.

⁴ *Vet. et Nov. Disc.* pars III, lib. iii, c. 19 (ed. 1705, pp. 524-5).

⁵ Van Lokeren, pt. I, pp. 95-7; cf. pp. 99, 117, 129, 132, for other dealings in tithes.

Under the year 1258 he writes again: "The plague of usury . . . did so ensnare the English religious houses, that there was no conventual house, nor cathedral, nor any so modest foundation but that it was involved in so many debts as made it despair of acquittance at any time."¹ Matthew Paris wrote still more indignantly under the year 1229. The pope, he says, in his war against Frederick II, "was involved in so many and so great debts, that he was at his wits' end to maintain the warlike expedition which he had undertaken". Therefore he demanded a heavy tax from the English clergy under pain of excommunication, and his agent, Stephen Segrave, demanded

that they should give him without delay the money which he required, whether by borrowing it or by any other means whatsoever. . . . So the prelates found no other resource, but to sell some, and to pawn others at usury, from their chalices, phials, reliquaries, and other sacred altar-vessels. Moreover this same Master Stephen had with him most iniquitous usurers who called themselves "merchants", cloaking usury under the name of trade. These men offered money to those who were needy and vexed with exactions; and, at the said Stephen's pressure under the most grievous penalties, many incurred debts by compulsion and fell afterwards into these men's toils, incurring irremediable loss. The land was filled with continual, but secret, curses, and all men prayed to God that this exaction might never bring fruit to its exactors. . . . From that time forward the land [of England] has never lacked certain Ultramontanes, who style themselves merchants; most impious usurers, who seek nothing else than to ensnare those men in especial whom the Roman Court is pressing for money.²

In circumstances like these, it was a great temptation to become hammer rather than anvil; and indications are not wanting to show that individual monks, like others of the clergy, were sometimes tempted to become usurers even in the most invidious sense. I have quoted cases in my *Medieval Village*, pp. 284ff., and here are three other instances. Petrus Cantor, the precentor of Notre-Dame, wrote in [1200]: "Moreover, certain Religious pretend under cover of their brethren or friends, whose moneys, they say, are deposited with them, and whose proctors in a sense they are, to give these things to traders,

¹ *Chronica*, R.S. pp. 168, 197.

² *Chron. Maj.* R.S. III, 188-9.

though it is forbidden to them to exercise other than ecclesiastical occupations.”¹ Again, Gregory IX, St Francis’s friend, commissioned a Cistercian and a Premonstratensian abbot as visitors in 1232. He wrote:

We are given to understand that some exempt monasteries of the diocese of Canterbury are spiritually deformed and grievously diminished in temporal goods, while the monks and nuns therein, seduced by the suggestions of the devil, and unmindful of their covenant with their Lord God, wherein they have renounced not only their own property but themselves also by taking the vows of their Order, nor fearing the condemnation of Ananias and Sapphira, do improperly appropriate to themselves and retain, not without the mark and guilt of theft, the goods of their monasteries. They hunt after pecuniary gain, by no venial sin, with trading and with usury; moreover monastic discipline is scattered to the winds, the brethren are exposed to contempt, and religion is blasphemed.

According to the monastic chronicler, the severity of this visitation was mitigated by judicious bribery on the part of the abbeys.² From a later date [1340] we have a visitation of St Peter’s priory at Ipswich. The bishop, after hearing evidence, drew up a series of charges, one of which runs: “We accuse thee, brother Clement [precentor and sacrist]...for that thou possessest money as a holder of private property and that thou lendest it to women and other folk.” He denied the charge, but confessed that he had 40s. (answering to about £180 nowadays), though here he pleaded the prior’s licence. The almoner also was accused of possessing a private hoard “which thou lendest to suspicious women”. Here again he denied, as also did brother John of Lindsey. But, as the editor points out, the system of “purgation” was far from strict on this visitation; and those who read the whole document with care will probably judge that the accusers had more truth on their side than the accused could admit.³ In 1447 the bishop found that a monk of Peterborough, brother John Turvey, “lent £20 at usury to one Thomas Mason of Peterborough, receiving in return for such loan from the said Thomas twenty shillings beyond the principal every quarter”.⁴

¹ *P.L.* ccv, col. 367.

² *M. Paris, Chron. Maj.* R.S. III, 238.

³ *E.H.R.* 1932, pp. 268 ff.

⁴ *Lincoln Record Soc.* (1929), XXI, 291.

In Florence, the inquisitorial sumptuary laws speedily became a dead letter. It fared with them as with the Church's laws against usury. These were formal and precise; yet out of the thirty Florentine loan banks of the thirteenth century, "two were kept by priests and three by convents".¹ Among the secular clergy, usury seems to have been even more frequent. A strong instance may be found in Innocent's letter of 1204 concerning the populous diocese of Tournai: "we have heard that in thy diocese many clergy are ill-famed in many ways; for some follow usury or filthy lucre, others fear not to commit adultery", etc., etc.²

The rate of interest for rent-charges during the years covered by Génestal (1150-1300), though high for modern ideas, was a good deal lower than that for mortgages in the earlier years. A table drawn up on pp. 199 ff. gives forty-two cases at 10 per cent., sixty-five at a higher rate, reaching once 20 per cent., and only eight at a lower rate, the lowest of all being nearly 7 per cent. The average would thus be from 11 to 12 per cent. And—another contrast—the sums invested are much smaller: the large majority are only 1, 2 or 3 *livres* (p. 183). Moreover, the borrowers, whenever we can trace them, are people living fairly near the abbey, and often actual tenants (p. 189). Everything tends to prove that "the clientèle was composed almost exclusively of tillers of the soil, and not of citizens". "If the Norman abbeys played the part of banks, it was of land-banks" (p. 184; cf. p. 186). The borrower's object was in most cases the improvement of his little farm (now that Normandy was enjoying three generations of peace between the Anglo-French wars of Richard and John and the terrible Hundred Years' War), the purchase of agricultural instruments, cattle, or manure; the building of stables or barns. For these purposes, the rent-charge system offered the thrifty peasant a chance of fighting his way to Kulak-rank. Here again, then, we find a strong contrast with the mortgage system. There, the loans were for consumption; a wasteful system. Here, they are for production; transactions often still more beneficial to the borrower than to the lender.

¹ *The Athenaeum*, Dec. 25, 1909. Dr G. Biagi's *Men and Manners of Old Florence*. The interest charged (writes Biagi) varied from 14½ to 25 per cent. Later it rose to as high as 66 per cent.

² Migne, *P.L.* ccxv, col. 528 (lib. vii, ep. 213).

Génestal's concluding words are so clear that they are worth repeating in full.

During our first period we have seen credit rare and unproductive, open only to lords and generally leading them to ruin; at that time the abbeys are of very small importance for the matter [of credit]; they alone [and not the borrowers] enrich themselves by the mortgage system. The second period, on the contrary, shows us these same abbeys spreading around the benefits of a credit destined to facilitate production, open to the middle classes and especially to rural folk, who, without overburdening themselves, can thus procure what they need for agricultural improvement. The monasteries are real land-banks, thickly spread over the country; they play a most important economic part, and one which they alone could have played.

This is a welcome reminder; for this particular subject illustrates better than most others the binocular view which we must always try to maintain in monastic history. The abbeys were preponderantly beneficent in [1300]; in [1500] they were unpopular, and men contrasted their great wealth with their actual services to society. Practically every monograph—and the French clergy, in especial, are very honourably distinguished by the multiplicity and average value of such monographs—confesses that contrast; it is forced upon the writers by the records themselves. So far, there is very little disagreement between Protestant and Roman Catholic authors; the real divergence comes when we ask whether the abbeys were ripe for dissolution or only for reform; and, even there, a good many writers on both sides are very near to agreement. Therefore it must be borne in mind that, when we feel bound, in face of the facts, to emphasize the conformity of these “other-worldly” folk to worldly ideas and practice, we are comparing them adversely only with their Rule, and not with the society in which they lived and worked. Monastic trading was rightly reprobated by the disciplinarians as prejudicial to monastic discipline. Yet, if we take the monk not only as he should have been in theory but as he was in fact, we may see that he added even here to the sum of beneficent world-activities. Realities are often so disappointing that even the decay of an ideal may show far better fruits than those of a cynical multitude, frankly or covertly scornful of ideals. I shall return to this aspect of the question at the end of the chapter.

So much, then, for natural trade and straightforward banking operations, practically unavoidable by a corporation endowed with many and varied possessions, and criticized by contemporaries mainly so far as they tended to distract the monk's thoughts from the direct contemplation of God. We must pass on now to other commercial activities which lend themselves more directly to criticism. Among these, one of the most questionable was the advantage taken of crusaders' necessities.

This is a point which the editors of chartularies are frequently compelled to emphasize. Guérard points out how much St-Père-de-Chartres gained financially by the crusades, partly from donations but still more from knights who had no other way of raising ready money than by selling or pledging their lands.¹ In Burgundy, "a multitude of crusaders of no great fortune were compelled to alienate their inherited lands to pay their expenses; and the abbeys profited by their difficulties to extend their own territories. Other nobles took occasion of their journey to repair their former injustices or to make fresh donations".² In Normandy, "The mention of [lands bought from lords] 'in order to go on the journey to Jerusalem' occurs very frequently in the abbey muniments".³ One crusader, in 1095, came to St-Vincent-de-Laon,

and there, after assembling all the monks in chapter, he humbly besought pardon for his rash fault [in having usurped some of their lands]. He was then bareheaded, and stretched on the ground as a criminal; for greater and completer satisfaction, he even willed that each monk separately [there were then between 30 and 40] should give him a certain number of strokes upon the shoulders with a scourge on this account.

He then left on the altar a charter promising considerable endowments.⁴ In [1250], we find a Cistercian, Caesarius of Heisterbach, speaking indignantly to his fellows against

those who take no heed what they preach or put forward, so long as they catch many folk. Such, to-day, are certain crusade-preachers, who, to men who will take the cross, promise in return so many or such and such souls required from purgatory: or, what is more mad,

¹ *Cart. St-Père*, p. cciv.

² *Cart. Molesme*, I, 138. This point was also emphasized by Professor H. W. C. Davis in his review (*E.H.R.* 1909, p. 126).

³ Sauvage, *Troarn*, p. 131.

⁴ Wyard, p. 196.

from hell, as though they held such souls caught in their net. Seeing that souls, once freed from their bodies, are no longer subject to any human judgement-seat, with what face do living men presume to sell them? They grant licence for usuries or robberies to be retained, if only they may get many folk into the halter of the crusade. . . . I would rather preach all my life, and catch no crusader, than to catch many thousands in that fashion. I have heard that the Devil hath lately preached the crusade and given the cross unto many folk; yet it is impossible that he should come to salvation.

And he adds revelations which a devil, through the mouth of a possessed person, had recently made to Theobald, precentor of Mainz.

Among other things, at a suitable moment, he said these words also: "Ye men, because ye have a merciful Lord, therefore ye freely sin [*licenter peccatis*]. If we devils could come back, as ye may, by penance, how many things should we then have to endure?"¹

With crusade endowments we may class those which came as thankofferings from imprisoned warriors. When Count Ferrand of Flanders was taken prisoner at the battle of Bouvines, his countess sought to move Providence for his freedom by "a truly royal" gift of land to the abbey of St-Bavon. They also bought from him, at terms advantageous to themselves, some 4200 acres of heath; and, in return, they lent him 1000 *livres* for his ransom.² At Canterbury, the monks of St Augustine's got from Reginald of Cornhill, in 1223, valuable property in Southwark, "principally in exchange for the money with which they redeemed him from the king's prison".³ At Vendôme the count gave an endowment in thankoffering for his release after the defeat of Agincourt. Every year the most pardonable criminal was to be released from his own prison, and was to pay 50 *sols* to the abbey in honour of its great relic, the Holy Tear of Christ.⁴ The monks of Grestain, in 1347, made a very advantageous bargain with the Chambellan de Tancarville, who needed financial help to pay his ransom after the battle of Crécy.⁵

A good many parallels, again, might be found for the following case recounted by Dr Rose Graham in her financial study of

¹ Caes. Heist. *Hom.* (1615), II, 46.

² Van Lokeren, pt. I, pp. 90, 97.

³ Thorne, cap. xx, § 4 (Twysden, col. 1878).

⁴ *Vendôme*, II, 285 ff.

⁵ *Grestain*, p. 80.

the Gilbertines of Malton; the Gilbertines were almost as great wool-merchants, for their numbers, as the Cistercians.

In 1244 William of Richburgh granted to the Prior and Convent of Malton seven bovates of land in Wellum, for which they paid thirty-six and a half marks of his debt to Josce, nephew of Aaron of York, and three marks to his mother Albreda as quitclaim of her dowry in Wellum. For sums of money down the canons thus got possession of the lands of certain impoverished lesser barons and knights. It seems probable that much other land was acquired by them in the same way, for during these years Henry III was very successful in squeezing money out of the Jews. Between 1243 and 1250 the Chief Rabbi, Aaron of York, paid 32,000 marks. In 1244, for another supposed ritual murder in London, the Jews were tallaged in 60,000 marks, to be paid in five years. To raise these sums, the Jews would put pressure on their creditors, and accordingly a great deal of land was open for sale to the religious houses. Many other monasteries besides Malton doubtless took advantage of these opportunities. In 1259, in the Provisions of Westminster, the Religious were forbidden to enter on the possession of land in any fief without the consent of the tenant-in-chief. The preamble to the Statute of Mortmain, however, notes that they had utterly disregarded this prohibition.¹

The abbeys were constantly tempted to take advantage of other landowners' necessities.

When a verderer of Cannock, in the thirteenth century, rendered himself liable to the severe penalties of the forest laws, he fled for his life beyond the seas, and sold his manor to St Thomas's priory at Stafford.

Similarly Sir Hugh de Okeover, impoverished by his loyalty to Henry III during the Barons' Revolt, sold many of his lands to the Abbot of Rocester.² The monks traded regularly, also, in the usual feudal dues: they sold marriages and wardships like other lords.

This brings us to another source of monastic income which modern opinion will probably class with this advantage taken of crusaders, viz. the generous grants of indulgences which, in most cases, monks had to buy with ready money, but which, once purchased, gave a rich return. That homily of Caesarius, by itself, would show the extent to which sensitive souls realized the dangers of that system as early as [1250]. His great Franciscan

¹ *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.* 1904, p. 141.

² Hibbert, *Diss.* pp. 15, 109.

contemporary, Berthold v. Regensburg, is never weary of exposing its abuses, though of course he accepts the system in itself, like his orthodox contemporaries. The "penny-preacher", he says, is a plague new to his generation; the man teaches a false reliance upon papal indulgences; he kills true penitence and sends many thousand souls to hell; he is almost as mischievous as the heretics; we may class him with harlots and with procuresses.¹ Yet the friars were soon among the busiest pardon-mongers in Europe; and the abbey-churches which Henry VIII's creatures tore down were built in considerable part through that system which raised St Peter's and roused Luther to revolt.

The growth of the system has been exhaustively described by Dr H. C. Lea.² The study of almost any large monastic chartulary will show us its gradual expansion, and the inflation of the currency to meet gradual depreciation. At first, it was much to gain forty days of pardon by the journey to the cathedral church of one's own diocese, perhaps very toilsome and even dangerous. Then the abbeys began to come in for their share. Here, again, beginnings were very modest: even in 1164, and to the important abbey of Ste-Colombe at Sens, Alexander III gave one of only twenty days for coming and visiting the relics at the abbey church. But Alexander IV (1252) gave 100 days for the visit of the relics, and 100 more for those who should contribute to the building of the church.³ By that time, indulgences had become so ubiquitous that only a few significant examples need be given here. In 1245 the Archbishop of Rouen gave permission to the abbey of Eu, whereby, seeing that it had been represented to him how the monks and abbot of Tréport, having conceived the design of building a sumptuous and magnificent church, were unable to complete it without assistance from the alms of the faithful, therefore he permitted them to carry throughout the dioceses those indulgences which they had obtained from His Holiness; whereunto, from his own store, the archbishop added 30 days to all those who should make contributions to the building, to which deed he very carefully exhorted them.⁴

¹ *Predigten*, ed. Pfeiffer, I, 132, 208, 394, 543; II, 12, 148, 219.

² *History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences*, vol. III (Swan Sonnenschein, 1896).

³ Brullée, pp. 111, 121.

⁴ Coquelin, *Hist. de l'Abbaye de Tréport*, ed. Lormier (Rouen, 1879), I, 131.

Take a similar English case (1321).

Bishop [of Bath and Wells] to his Official, Archdeacons, Deans, Rectors, etc.

The conventual Church of Athelney is ruinous; no funds for repairs; allow the monks to plead their case in Churches on Holy Days after Gospel, assuring contributors (if contrite) of 30 days' indulgence "ab injunctis penitentiis" in addition to any other authorised indulgences.¹

Athelney was a dependent cell to Glastonbury, which, apart from its own enormous income, drew money from this cell. The entry is typical of the extent to which the system had spread before the end of the thirteenth century. By that time, practically every monastery of importance owed a good deal of its income to indulgences. Stereotyped forms began to grow up; *e.g.* Bromholm in Norfolk and Sta Caterina at Bologna had the same indulgence which had been granted to St Mark's at Venice.² Dr Rose Graham writes, in her very thorough and instructive study of the Gilbertine monastery of Malton:

The canons, like all other Religious and secular clergy in the thirteenth century, were keenly aware of the financial value of indulgences, and sought after them... [They] got their full share of the conspicuous and lucrative increase in indulgences which were granted in Western Christendom by Nicholas IV. In 1292 he relaxed a year and forty days of penance to penitents visiting the church of St Mary at Malton on the four feasts of the Virgin and the feasts of the dedication and of St Gilbert. It seems that the canons wanted the longer indulgence to attract offerings which no longer came in; for the spiritualities of Malton in 1292 had fallen considerably in value.³

The Benedictine abbey of Oseney had twelve altars, at which an aggregate of 263 days of indulgence could be earned; the first of these grants had been made in 1227, and the last in 1269.⁴ The Cistercians of Kamp, as early as 1295, could boast 1040 days of indulgence yearly to all who visited them and offered for the fabric "or other necessities".⁵ Before the Dissolution, the lists

¹ *Reg. Drogheda*, p. 189.

² Miss C. M. Ady has supplied the latter instance, from the State Archives of Bologna, *Provisioni e Riformazioni*, decree of 15 Feb. 1402.

³ *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.* 1904, p. 151.

⁴ *Oseney*, III, xviii.

⁵ Eckertz, II, 364.

had reached proportions which would have astounded twelfth-century popes. The editor of the *Rites of Durham* (1903) has printed on pp. 148ff. the terms of fifty-six separate indulgences to visitors who offered at different altars in that great monastic church. R. Wackernagel, in his history of Bâle, emphasizes the enormous number of indulgences granted to the different churches, especially when they had building on hand. "Great and lengthy undertakings like the building of the cathedral are most clearly pictured to us by these grants of indulgences, in their progress, in the cessation of work, and in its revival."¹ The nunnery of Syon, founded under patronage of Henry V, had amassed an amazing treasure of pardons within a century. The following extracts may suffice from a list which runs to three pages and a half:

every day in the year, whosoever cometh to the said monastery devoutly giving somewhat to the reparations of the said monastery and sayeth five Pater-nosters, and five Aves, and a Creed shall have five hundred days of pardon... *Item* Whosoever will come to the said monastery in the feast of Saint Peter, for every Pater-noster that he saith, and for every penny or penny's worth that he giveth to the reparation and edifying of the same monastery shall have one hundred and forty days of pardon... The sum of indulgence and pardon cometh to this, granted by Divers Holy Fathers Popes of Rome, Archbishops and Bishops, Cardinals and Legates (beside the quotidian pardon which is showed in the beginning, and the plenary remission), four thousand years of pardon, ten Lents, and thirteen hundred days.²

Still more wholesale were the grants to entire Orders.

In the Dominican *Bullarium* there are collected no less than 382 concessions of this kind to that Order prior to the end of the pontificate of Leo X, including one granted by John XXIII and condemned by Innocent VIII, in 1486, of five years and five quarantines for simply kissing a Dominican habit.

The Portiuncula indulgence, claimed by the Franciscans as having been granted by Honorius III in 1223, is scarcely less astounding, considering the way in which it fought its way to

¹ *Gesch. d. Stadt Basel* (1916), II, 2, 785.

² The full document is in Hearne's Appendix to Fordun's *Scotichronicon* (1722), p. 1399: reprinted in modernized spelling in my *Life in the M. Ages*, IV, 310.

a firm ecclesiastical position in spite of its want of documentary evidence and internal probability, in the teeth of Dominican opposition.¹ After the Reformation, these rivalries compelled the popes to aim at what we might call a flat rate for all Orders; before this was completed, Paul V (1606) "issued a decree revoking all indulgences of any kind enjoyed by the members of both the monastic and mendicant Orders, and replaced them with a series more moderate in character".² In spite of this, they have multiplied and are still multiplying.

The majority of these later indulgences gave only indirect pecuniary help to the monasteries; but in one way that indirect help has been considerable, though not immediately obvious to the modern reader. The grant of a fair to a monastery often bound trade and religion together. For such fairs were commonly held on the dedication-day of the abbey church; thus "enormous crowds grew accustomed to flock thither for the sake of the indulgences granted by the pope to all who visited the church [on such days]. Hence, at Sens, the custom grew up of giving these fairs the name of *pardons*".³ St Augustine's abbey at Canterbury held a five days' fair round the anniversary of its patron saint; but this was discontinued under Edward I, after two centuries, partly "by reason of the wranglings and quarrels and even fightings which frequently arose in the monks' cemetery", where the fair was held.⁴

The action of the friars is so important here, that it is worth while to give concrete instances. Bishop Brantyngham of Exeter, in 1380, had great difficulties with a roving Dominican in his diocese, who went about "extorting pecuniary gain from our simple folk, by feigned falsehoods and subtle devices, under cloak of papal power committed to him, as he asserts, and holding up and exposing the Sacrament of Penitence everywhere to sale...to the grievous peril of their souls and of his own". Driven from Exeter city, he took refuge in Cornwall, whither the bishop pursued him with fresh fulminations; the final result is

¹ H. C. Lea, *Indulgences*, p. 236. Sabatier's attempts to maintain the authenticity of this indulgence seem to me one of the weakest sides of his work.

² Lea, *op. cit.* pp. 460ff.

³ Bouvier, p. 149.

⁴ Thorne, cap. IX, § 3 (Twysden, col. 1796).

unrecorded.¹ Here, again, is a case from Württemberg a century later.

The Dominican convent at Stuttgart was a-building in 1471; and, with buildings of that kind, it was always prudent to protract the business as long as possible. In 1476, the bishop of Constance granted letters patent to the Dominicans, in which he prescribed to all the clergy of his diocese, when the collector made his yearly visit to them to beg alms and vend his indulgences, not only to receive him as a friend but also to grant him the use of their pulpits. When he did not choose to preach himself, the parson was to take his place; and, so long as he was there, all other collections for the church of the parish, with few exceptions, must be suspended. Everyone who contributed then received an indulgence of 40 days from the penances laid upon him for grave sins. It is noteworthy that the monasteries often put such indulgences and begging-licences up to auction, and thus saved the expense of keeping a collector of their own: this, however, was forbidden under pain of loss of privilege.²

At a synod of that same diocese, in 1493, it was enacted that "the mendicant friars must specially be forbidden, in view of their abusive dealings with indulgences, to bring such letters into any parish church oftener than once a year, or on the fair on the day of the patron saint, and in Lent".³ It is characteristic that we should find a Dominican preacher, Gabriel Barletta, about 1470, telling his hearers that, if they wished to learn the way to Paradise, they must listen to the monastery bells, with their refrain of *dando, dando, dando* "giving, giving, giving".⁴ Meanwhile, however, reasonable people felt the essential weakness of this financial system. The Cistercian Adrian de But, writing of the year 1463, says: "Such graces of letters and indulgences were sold everywhere [*passim*], that the authority of the Keys and of papal letters was utterly cheapened"—*omnino vilesceret*.⁵ The contemporary Oxford chancellor, Thomas Gascoigne, counted the abuse of indulgences among the Seven Rivers of Babylon beside which the True Church sat and wept. He wrote:

Sinners say nowadays: "I care not what and how many sins I commit in God's sight; for I can very easily and quickly get plenary

¹ *Reg. Brantyngham*, I, 410, 418, 428.

² *Cless*, II, ii, 312.

³ *Arx*, II, ii, 660.

⁴ *Ce qu'on a fait de l'Église* (Paris, Alcan, 1912), p. 48.

⁵ *Chroniques des Dunes* (Brussels, 1870), p. 450.

remission of any guilt and penalty through an absolution and indulgence granted unto me by the pope, whose written grant I have bought for 4*d.* or 6*d.*, or as a stake for a game of tennis." For these pardon-mongers run about the country and give a letter [of indulgence] sometimes for 2*d.*, sometimes for a good draught of wine or ale, sometimes for their stake at tennis if they are beaten, sometimes for the hire of a harlot, sometimes for carnal love."¹

¹ *Lib. Ver.* p. 123; cf. pp. 3, 33, 53, 54, 79, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 95, 97, 118, 119, 120, 121, 125, 126, 224.

CHAPTER XVII

FEUDAL DUES

OTHER sources of the monks' income need the modern reader's attention, as arising from natural position either as feudal lords or as traders.

Feudal dues were, of course, multiple and miscellaneous, no less for the spiritual than for the temporal lord. The majority of monasteries had at least one mill in monopoly, a privilege which caused the fiercest of all the quarrels at St Albans between citizens and monks. St-Vaast d'Arras possessed twenty-three mills in different parts of the country.¹ The monopoly of the village oven, again, was as lucrative as the mill.² The pigeon-house, again, was a frequent manorial monopoly. At Ely there were several, belonging to different officials of the cathedral priory;³ so, also, the dovecotes and their profits come very frequently into the Crowland rolls printed by Dr Page.

One of the commonest dues, and most invidious, was the "mortuary", or "heriot", or "best chattel", which the monastery could often claim as "lord", and perhaps still more often as "rector", as a death duty from all but the very poorest. A few specimens may be given. The prior of Walsingham "had a mortuary of every parishioner in Walsingham, of the second best animal; and, if there was but one, then of that".⁴ The abbey of Doue, in southern France, had a dependent cell of St-Germain. Here the prior, according to custom, "shall receive, at the death of every householder, seven *sols* and sixpence; at the death of an adolescent, five *sols*, at the death of a child, three *sols* and nine pence". This was in 1545.⁵ St-Bavon-de-Gand had the right of taking the best chattel, at the peasant's death, in more than seven villages.⁶ I have not come across many detailed

¹ Hurter, II, 39.

² Anton, III, 274 (from the *Register of Caesarius of Prüm*, p. 417).

³ Atkinson, p. 11.

⁴ Blomefield's *Norfolk* (1808), IX, 277. Compare *Lit. Cant.* R.S. II, 92.

⁵ *Doue*, p. 144.

⁶ Van Lokeren, pt. II, p. 124.

accounts of mortuaries in monastic rolls; but here is one from a comparatively small priory, Bicester, in 1315, printed in Fleetwood's history of that house. The sacristan accounts for twenty-five mortuaries, at a total value of £1. 11s. 9d., or about £60 modern. These, however, seem only to have been ecclesiastical mortuaries, not manorial; and evidently many came from the poor. In one list two are lumped together for 6d., three for 10d. The tunic of Will. Leaf is priced at 4d.; Alice the winnowers' chest was worth 12d.; we have other chests, brass pots, etc. In 1386, one mortuary comes in from a manservant and two from maidservants; in 1408, from a maidservant and a boy. For, gradually, the clergy seem to have contented themselves with less than the earlier claim in some cases, while at the same time they extended the mortuary liabilities over a much wider area. The act of 1529 decreed that no mortuary should be exacted by the Church, *qua* Church, from anyone dying with less than £6. 6s. 8d. in moveables.¹

Henry VIII limited this old ecclesiastical custom, though he did not touch the manorial abuse.

Another has been printed which throws light on the same system among the churches appropriated to Lichfield cathedral.² It is of the year 1339, and records 105 mortuaries, including 31 cows, 17 oxen, 12 heifers, 5 stirks and 2 calves. The mortuary was levied on every dead householder or householder's wife; and, if there were less than three beasts, the dean and chapter could take instead the best garment or household utensil. The first nine items may be given as a fair sample.

For the corpse of Margery del Ford...one indifferent [*debilis*] tunic, which is given for God's sake³...William Ely, a cow sold for 7s...Emma of Chatsworth a super-tunic sold to Lettice Stone for 2s...Alote Bate, an indifferent cloak for 2d...Alote, Matthew's wife, a tunic sold to Joan of Hulme for 2d...Agnes, wife of Thomas Hulm, a super-tunic sold to Henry Shore for 2s. 6d...Helen, wife of Richard Stone, a cow instead of 4s., sold for 5s...John del Green, an indifferent cow, for 3s...Robert Robin, an indifferent sleeveless cloak and also 6d., sold for 4d...Cicely Goodman a stirk for 1s. 4d.

¹ I have given a brief account of this system in No. 8 of my *Medieval Studies—Priests and People in the Middle Ages*.

² *Journ. Derbyshire Arch. Soc.* (1889), XI, 144 ff. The editor judges (though on what grounds is not quite clear) that this was a year of more deaths than usual.

³ Either to the bereaved family, or to some other poor.

In the whole list (notes the editor) the tunic varies from 2*d.* to 3*s.* St-Bavon at Ghent had still, in 1346, the ancient seignorial right over all hives of wild bees found in the forests, which Eginhard, five centuries earlier, had reckoned among the most profitable dues of lordship.¹ Ely had, by royal gift, 30,000 herrings a year from the port of Dunwich.²

Other endowments were of a much more casual kind. Thurstan de Montfort [1200] gave to the nunnery of Pinley "the tenth part of all the victuals spent in his house; viz. bread, beer, flesh, fish, and whatsoever was dressed in his kitchen".³ At Vendôme, which possessed the Holy Tear shed by Christ at the grave of Lazarus, this relic brought in, among other revenues, a yearly 50 *sols* from a prisoner delivered that year from the count's prison on condition of paying this due to the relic.⁴ When a monk celebrated his first Mass at a great monastery, the offerings might amount to as much as 30 *livres*.⁵ Upon this subject we have an absolutely unexceptionable witness, for his own time and country, in Martin of Senging, third prior of Melk, in 1433, at the time when that great abbey was in the forefront of those monastic reforms which had been started by the Councils of Constance and Bâle. I hope to return to him in my last volume; meanwhile, here is his evidence as to the danger of these First Mass gifts.⁶ His whole treatise is addressed to the Fathers of the Council of Bâle, and he is emphasizing the root difficulty of all these struggles for effective reform: the impossibility of making sure that even official visitors have the cause truly at heart: too often these are "blind leaders of the blind...not one of them has either seen or practised [true] observance of the Rule".

Moreover, in a certain monastery which was to be visited, under the eyes of the visitors—*visitoribus prope existentibus*—one of the brethren who were there celebrating their First Mass held a solemn "marriage-feast"—*solemnnes nuptias*—and invited to these "nuptials" almost all the community of the city hard by, of both sexes. This assembly, when Mass was finished, feasted in the conventual refectory

¹ Van Lokeren, pt. I, p. 124; cf. p. 127; cf. Henry, p. 243.

² Canon Seiriol Evans in *Church Times* for Dec. 6, 1933.

³ Dugdale-Caley, IV, 114.

⁴ *Vendôme*, II, 280ff.

⁵ *St-Martial*, p. 77 (A.D. 1211).

⁶ B. Pez, *Bibl. Ascet.* (1725), VIII, 513.

of the brethren, upon flesh-foods and all that they could get. After the feast, the pipers played and they danced in that same place, men and women together, and each offered some ready money to this newly-priested monk, or some gift: and those things the lord abbot left in his possession. It is to such devilish acts that we have clear allusion in that text of Exodus: *The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play*.¹ The visitors knew this; nor were they ignorant, for they were hard by—*cum propinqui fuerint*—yet they feared not [to permit it]; nay, they gave out that such “nuptials” would be celebrated on the Sunday following by another monk.

Other sources of gain were scarcely more easy to justify by Gospel Christianity. The two chantries founded by the Black Prince in Canterbury cathedral, and for endowment of which he gave his whole manor of Vauxhall, were in recognition of the dispensation to marry his cousin.² Bishops, for a consideration, would give monasteries formal licence to beg throughout their dioceses.³

But there was danger in these more casual dues, especially when, as often happened, they were as inconvenient to other folk as they were welcome to the monks. Eudes de Sully, a canon of Autun, gave to the abbey of St-Martin what seem to have been practically all his possessions (1223). Among them was a vineyard “wherein the said Eudes has the right of gleaning his vines freely and absolutely for one or two days before the rest of the vintagers”.⁴ Anybody who knows how strictly, in modern vine-districts, any such anticipation is forbidden, as exposing the remaining grapes to the concentrated ravages of the birds, will realize how much this right meant to the privileged owner, and what envy it would breed among the unprivileged. We may compare this with two examples from Flanders. In 1425 a definite rule of the court was made with regard to the peasants of Ekkerghem, whose overlords were the abbey of St-Bavon and the chapter of St-Pharaïlde. The monks or canons had the right of choosing, during the fortnight before Midsummer, the tenth bundle of all vegetables. They might then, at their own choice, either take them or leave them to grow until October 1; but in

¹ This was the stock text of medieval theologians in their condemnation of the village dance.

² *Lit. Cant.* II, 427.

³ *Bulletin de la Société de Borda* (Dax, 1906), 31me année, p. 308.

⁴ Bulliot, p. 65.

that case the farmers were not obliged to look after them.¹ In [1050] the monks of St-Hubert (Ardennes) could claim all fish caught at Huy, on the Meuse, between 3 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday evening.² Grestain, in Normandy, was endowed with the first lamprey of the year, and with all sturgeons caught between Quillebeuf and Noirport on the Seine.³ Such rights often led to serious misunderstandings. When, in 1414, the nuns of St Lambrecht bought the protection of the Bishop of Speyer by resigning to him many of their lucrative feudal dues, "the fishing rights were so strictly assigned to the bishop, that the customal has an express clause to the effect that, if the miller presumes to send the prioress an eel from his mill-dam, the bishop's officers might come and take it even from the frying-pan in the nunnery kitchen".⁴ In Scotland, where such "second tithes" (from the lord's kitchen, his hunting, etc.) were not uncommon, they seem to have always been commuted, after a few generations, by mutual consent, for a money payment.⁵

Let me give two further instances here, in addition to those printed in my *Medieval Village*, of the friction over rents and dues in a society not yet advanced to the full stage of money economy. The twelfth-century chronicler of St-Trond writes, concerning the abbey serfs:

Even those who confess [themselves as our serfs] and profess that they will pay their debts, do in fact share with the stewards the fiction of their fraud and deceit. After a man's death they produce some worthless ragged garment, or a lame sheep, or a measly sow, and, taking their oath that they have received nothing better of the dead man, they swear (if they are suffered to do so), nay, perjure themselves without any fear of God; or even the stewards permit them to depart unsworn.⁶

And here is an extract from the assessment of Depping (Lincs) for tenths in 1292:

Item, there is there of rent in capons annually, as recognitions of lordship, 24 capons, and above the charge on it each is worth $\frac{1}{2}d.$,

¹ Van Lokeren, pt. II, p. 113.

² *St-Hubert*, p. 237. Almost equally troublesome must have been the tithes of hunting which had been given to the abbey (*ibid.* p. 275).

³ *Grestain*, p. 26 [1050].

⁴ F. X. Remling, *Abteien u. Klöster in Rheinbayern*, I, 153 n.

⁵ *Scottish Abbeys*, pp. 72 ff.

⁶ D'Achery, *Spicilegium* (1666), VII, 512.

because two men ought to carry two capons, and they ought on that day to eat with the prior and they will have three good dishes in a meal.

And there is also there of rent in fowls annually 77. Sum 3*d*. The fowls are worth nothing beyond the charge on the rent, because two men will carry two fowls, and those two men ought to eat at the table of the prior, and they will have in dishes as before. And therefore it ought not to be extended.¹

Another difficulty inherent in the social conditions of the Middle Ages was that of communication with scattered properties, often far distant from each other and from the abbey, yet each paying its dues mainly, if not wholly, in kind. This is one of the first considerations forced upon any reader who studies attentively any monastic chronicle or chartulary. The Durham muniments supply considerable evidence for the prior's movements during 395 days of 1310-11. In all this time, we can only infer that he was "presumably in Durham" from the fact that he was not evidently elsewhere. These demonstrable absences amounted to 249 days, most of them at different manors where he had a great house; at Beaurepaire, for instance, he spent 129 days.² But these were not business journeys; it was the obedientiaries who went now and then on business to the main economic centres; even so, however, most of the management in outlying places was necessarily left to the local bailiff or reeve. Nor was it only the great abbeys whose arms stretched so far. La Bussière, a very ordinary house, had a register containing "a detailed list of the abbey possessions in more than 80 parishes of Burgundy".³ Acey, never an abbey of the first rank, had possessions in thirty-three different villages.⁴

These endowments of distant properties led sometimes to almost hopeless difficulties. The Cistercian abbey of Kamp is in Rhineland, close by Cleve: it possessed lands near Rostock on the Baltic. At last, in 1436, it sold these estates "by reason of many difficulties and violences, and perils both of body and of soul", involved in their possession.⁵ Again, St Angelo di Monte Mirteto, originally Cistercian of the reform of Fiore, received in

¹ Lunt, *Papal Revenues*, II, 190, from MS. Harl. 3658, f. 18-19.

² *Durham Acct. Rolls*, II, 507.

³ Fyot, p. 53.

⁴ Blanchot, p. 79.

⁵ Eckertz, II, 387.

gift the Kentish church of Littlebourne. This, for obvious business reasons, the Italian monks soon farmed out to those of St Augustine's, Canterbury, for £20 a year (1241). In 1386, the English monks had not seen a monk of this foreign abbey for 120 years past; and, since one of their brethren was in Italy on other business, they commissioned this proctor to make enquiry as to the state of the abbey to which this large sum was yearly due. This proctor was no other than William Thorne, whose chronicle is one of our best sources for Canterbury history. He wrote to friends in Rome, from which St Angelo was twenty-four miles distant. These reported that

the abbey is desert and desolate by reason of the troubles of war, and is a cell dependent upon the monastery of Sta Trinità, a mile outside the town of Core. There are no more in that monastery nor in its cell than two monks only, if those may be called monks, seeing that they are utterly ribald, keeping at no point either the Rule or the Order, but sitting in taverns and dishonest places; men whose life is intolerable to hear, or whose manners to follow; but one of these who were sent, and who seemed saner than the other, Jacopo by name, answered that they could not sell or alienate this pension or their right therein, unless they had an abbot lawfully elected [*abbatem catholicum*].¹

It will thus be seen how little justification there is for the popular modern idea that the monks were never absentee landlords.² It originated, apparently, with William Cobbett, whose strange combination of enthusiasm, common sense, and ignorance of fact have earned him a bad pre-eminence among historians of the Reformation. It would almost be truer to say that the monasteries were typical absentee landlords. In the three volumes of the *Literae Cantuarienses*, one of the longest and most exciting episodes is the struggle of these Canterbury monks to get in their dues from Tintern in Ireland, and their final commitment of the matter to a middleman, who had probably no more conscience than the middleman of to-day.

¹ Thorne, *Chronica*, c. XLII, § 1, cols. 2186-2194. Compare, for a Norman abbey, *Grestain*, p. 31 (twelfth century).

² E.g. G. K. Chesterton, *Short History of England*, p. 144: "Where monks were landlords, they did not become rack-renting landlords, and could not become absentee landlords." As for their never rack-renting, see Dr Neilson's article on the Drygrange case in *The Scottish Historical Review* (1910), VII, 358ff. and my *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 123.

The Gilbertine monks of Sempringham had similar difficulties with their Scottish possessions, and fell back upon similar methods. In Scotland itself, the rapid growth and extension of the "feu", as contrasted with the ordinary lease, were probably caused by the breakdown of the middleman system among the numerous distant monastic possessions.

The great abbeys naturally exploited for economic advantage their points of contact with royalty and the aristocracy. It is not sufficiently realized nowadays that the tournament, so dear to the medieval nobility, was hateful to the Church. Just as the moralists are almost unanimous against the poor in their condemnation of the village dance, so they condemn tournaments in face of the rich, because of the quarrels and loss of life which they often occasioned, and their extravagant expenditure in all cases. Three popes prohibited and anathematized the tournament unreservedly between 1130 and 1181; and four others, with reservations, during the next 120 years; yet as Ducange points out, "no anathema or papal bull could suppress its popularity".¹ And at Westminster Abbey in 1445,

as on many other [occasions] in the years that followed, tournaments were held in the great sanctuary north of the church. It is interesting to note that the sacrist of the Abbey made the most of these. In modern fashion he erected stands and removed windows, and generally made provision for the many spectators of such interesting sights, and reaped a corresponding profit.²

Another product of medieval conditions, sometimes startling to modern readers, was the relation between the monk-lord and his bondmen. This will come more definitely before us at a later stage; but at this point, when we are dealing especially with feudal dues, it is necessary to note the market value of the serf. Feudalism had rescued Europe from anarchy: the labourer had some protection for his body from the lord and for his soul from the priest; but the price had to be paid. Wherever the transaction can be traced fully in the documents—and it often can be—not one manumission in a hundred is gratuitous. This is natural enough when we consider the circumstances; bondage was a debt owing from the bondman to his lord, whether secular or

¹ Joinville (1668), diss. VI, p. 170.

² Westlake, *Westminster*, p. 141.

religious; and it was almost as seldom remitted gratuitously as any other debt. Bloch, in his classic study of French rural conditions, writes: "In fact, with rare exceptions, due to gratitude or to friendship, manumissions were regular contracts whose clauses were sometimes long contested and bitterly discussed." And he quotes from a MS. of the abbey of Ste-Geneviève, where a list is headed "these are the possessions which we bought and the buildings which we constructed from the moneys of the liberties of our men and others whose names are written here below".¹ In France especially, the abbeys sometimes made great sums by selling freedom to their serfs. St-Pierre-de-Sens, in 1267, made a bargain of this kind with all their bondmen in the wide district between Seine and Yonne, 266 in number, who bound themselves before the royal bailiff to pay 6000 *livres parisis* as the price of freedom—the equivalent of £2000 sterling at that time. About the same time, the abbey of St-Germain-des-Prés sold freedom to a whole village for the sum of 1400 *livres tournois*, or £350.² The serfs of St-Germain d'Auxerre, in 1255, paid the abbot 1000 *livres* for their freedom. At Gigny, in the same district, the serfs struck collectively in the fifteenth century, and by this fight obtained liberty from the one most burdensome due, that of *mainmorte*.³

Another kind of feudal due which the monastic lords frequently enforced was that which in France was called *joyeux avènement*, or *joyeuse entrée*. As the baron could demand heavy contributions on special occasions, such as his ransom in war, the knightling of his eldest son, or the marriage of his eldest daughter, so the abbot seized upon the opportunity for similar claims at his accession. The priest expected friendly contributions for his first Mass, and the abbot for his *joyeuse entrée* into office; and these friendly contributions, in process of time, had become so customary that they had acquired the strict sanction of law. Here, again, I have quoted cases in my *Medieval Village* (pp. 54, 197); a few may be added here.

The eighty families who composed the village of St-Pierre-du-Montier (or at least the taxable units of that village) had to

¹ Pp. 112-13; cf. p. 117; compare the implication of sale in *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. III, 418.

² Bouvier, p. 160; cf. my *Medieval Village*, p. 160, for other instances, and Bloch, p. 111.

³ *Hist. Illust. Yonne*, pp. 438, 905.

pay 100 *livres* for the *joyeux avènement* of each fresh abbot at St-Martin-d'Autun. In 1400 they attempted resistance, but were non-suited.¹ The Abbot of Montier-la-Celle exacted a "gracious present" from every incumbent at his institution to any of the churches appropriated to the monastery. In 1185 the Bishop of Troyes put an end to disputes on this point by a formal confirmation of the abbot's right.² Similar cases may be found in Juenin, *Tournus*, p. 156 and Peigné-Delacourt, p. 95 (No. CXLII).

Let us turn to English cases. The abbots of St Augustine's, Canterbury, received "a subsidy under the name of palfrey-money" from their tenants at their first accession. The sum levied in 1272 is recorded by the chronicler Thorne: it amounted to £138. 0s. 11d. Of this, £1. 4s. came from three substantial individuals, the rest was levied from the different manors, and was graded from Minster, which paid £53. 6s. 8d., down to four which paid only 14s. 10d. between them.³ Again, in 1310, "Abbot Ralph received a subsidy from his tenements for his palfrey, even as his predecessors the lords Nicholas and Thomas had received in their time." It is interesting to confront this "palfrey-money" with contemporary economic facts. In 1359 Edward III bought two horses for his royal use; one cost £50 and another £70; at the same time £6. 13s. 4d. was sufficient to compensate Sir Andrew Lutterell for the death of his horse on active service, and £16 was the ransom paid for Geoffrey Chaucer, king's squire, captured by the French.⁴ The Abbot of St Augustine's, therefore, could have bought with his palfrey-money three horses, two royal and one knightly. Turn to the other great monastery of Canterbury, the cathedral priory of Christ Church. In 1265, "King Henry III warns the tenants of the Monastery of Christ Church that they ought to contribute towards the purchase of a palfrey for the newly created Prior, in accordance with a custom already ancient at the date of the writ". This tribute is casually mentioned again in 1331.⁵ At the equally wealthy abbey of Bury, each fresh abbot took from the

¹ Bulliot, p. 250.

² *Revue Mabillon* (1931), XXI, 46.

³ *Chronica*, c. xxvi, § 3 (Twysden, col. 1921; cf. col. 2011).

⁴ J. J. Jusserand, *Hist. Litt. Angl.* I, 274.

⁵ *Lit. Cant.* I, 364; III, 405.

townsfolk 100 marks at his accession, as his fee for "recognizing" the liberties granted to them by his predecessors. The citizens contested this in 1383, but the judges decided against them.¹ Crowland exacted a similar contribution sometimes, but apparently not regularly.² On the other hand, there was at least one instance where the monastery was not agent but patient in the system of *joyeux avènement*. St-Pierre-le-Vif at Sens, in 1345, redeemed for a lump payment of 200 *livres tournois* this tribute which the abbey had been obliged to pay to each successive Archbishop of Sens at his incoming.³

Another highly-prized feudal due was that of the gallows: "magnum emolumentum est justicia" was a medieval proverb. The fullest privileges of lordship involved three stages of justiciary rights, which the French lawyers distinguished as *haute*, *moyenne*, and *basse*. *Haute justice* implied the right of condemning and executing felons, which again implied the right to seize their chattels. Gallows-rights, therefore, were often fiercely claimed and stubbornly defended, by spiritual lords as by lay. I have given instances in my *Scottish Abbeys* (p. 74) and *Medieval Village* (pp. 189-91, 557). In Pomerania, a district colonized and Christianized comparatively late in the Middle Ages, nearly all the great abbeys had this right: even nunneries often had it in all countries; the right was quite common in England. Here are two concrete English cases beyond those above referred to; the first is fully recorded in the Tewkesbury archives under the year 1249. The text may be found in *Annales Monastici* (R.S.), I, 511 ff.; I give it here in the editor's brief summary.

A thief caught in the land of the abbot of Tewkesbury, but taken to the court of the Earl of Gloucester at Cranborne and there hanged.⁴ Another thief caught and taken to the abbats' court at Upwinbourne. The earl's bailiff opposes the abbat's jurisdiction, and he goes to the

¹ *Mem. St Edmund's*, R.S. III, 135.

² Page, p. 49.

³ Bouvier, p. 141.

⁴ The summary here omits two most illuminating sentences from the text, which imply the economic and social importance of these gallows-rights. "This robber was brought to the earl's court, where he was judged and hanged through the folly of the abbot's bailiffs. The abbot, hearing this, was in vehement wrath against his own bailiffs, seeing that the liberty of his monastery had been grievously violated by this deed."

earl himself to complain. The earl orders an enquiry to be made into the question of the abbats' right. In consequence of delay, the abbat applies again to the earl; and another order is issued. Persons chosen to investigate the case. Their testimony. The abbat finding it going against him, protests against the manner in which the enquiry was held, and goes to the earl. The earl says the abbat must keep his prisoner till his return to England. But, on the abbat's remonstrance, orders a fresh investigation to be made against the time of his return, the abbat to use the powers of his court in the meantime. The abbat holds his court at Up-Wimborne. Trial and accusation of the thief; who is condemned and hanged.

Again in 1274

a long and expensive suit was begun between the prior and convent of Dunstable and Eudo la Zouche, who had become lord of Houghton and Eaton Bray by his marriage with Millicent de Cantelow. Eudo refused to recognise the rights of the prior (established not only by charter, but by long custom) to a gallows and prison in Houghton; he released one of his men from the prison and overthrew the gallows. Under the next prior, William le Breton, the gallows was restored; but Eudo still refused to recognise the prison as the prior's right, and presently erected a gallows of his own. The dispute went on for some years, and, after the death of Eudo, was continued by his wife Millicent until the year 1289, when it was finally decided in favour of the prior.¹

Montier-la-Celle, though not in the first rank of French abbeys, had "haute justice" in seventeen villages. In 1494 it had thirty-one monks.² In 1279 St Augustine's at Canterbury thus got the chattels of nineteen felons.³

Equally characteristic of the age was the right of wreck, to which lords of all kinds clung with equal tenacity. It included a good deal more than the mere name implies; great fish such as whales, porpoises and sturgeon were included. For instance, a jury of 1293 testified that the Abbot of Selby

takes, under the name of wreck, all sturgeons caught in those parts and in that water, by whomsoever they be caught. And they say that the men of the aforesaid abbot followed the men of William of Atton,

¹ *V.C.H. Beds*, I, 373 a.

² *Revue Mabillon* (1931), XXI, 94-5, 195. Some gallows which had been neglected were re-erected at the end of the fifteenth century.

³ Thorne, in Twysden, col. 1928. Other examples, beyond those given in my other books, may be found in *Olim*, II, 103; *Coventry Leet Book*, E.E.T.S. I, 8; Fonteneau, p. 296; *Zwyyveke* (Nunnery), p. 52; Bulliot, p. 256.

who had there wounded a certain porpoise to death, and that they would have taken that sturgeon (*sic*) from them and would have appropriated the said sturgeon to the said abbot by way of the forfeit aforesaid; but the said William's men suffered it not, so that, through the contention between these two parties, the men of the bishop of Durham took that fish.¹

By Church law excommunication was pronounced on those who took advantage of shipwreck to commit robbery: if the owners survived, they could claim what was left of ship and cargo. But in practice the medieval beachcomber's conscience was even more elastic than that of British seaside folk within living memory; and one of Innocent III's decretals is directed against a bishop of Agde who was accused of such robbery.² Thus, later medieval moralists were by no means blind to the unchristian practices which sometimes resulted from these rights of wreck.³ On the other hand, there was sometimes more consideration for the sufferers from wreck than might have been anticipated. St Augustine's, Canterbury, in 1432, received two interesting wreck items. The first briefly records "£1. 6s. 8d. for wreck of the sea and other commodities accruing unto us". The second is unfortunately mutilated with age and damp; but the one perfectly clear point is that a certain wreck produced five casks of wine, worth £4 each. The monks seem to have spent £6. 9s. 3d. on the expenses of salvage and on "gifts to divers gentlefolk of the admiral [of the Cinque Ports] and others". They record £3. 10s. 9d. (or the rough equivalent of some £90 modern) as their clear profit from the transaction, and apparently they gave the remaining £10 (that is, half of the total value of the wine) to the merchants to whom it belonged.⁴ Side by side with this we may put the generosity of Abbot Samson at St Edmundsbury. When one of his richest tenants died almost intestate, so that more than £130 fell into the abbot's disposition as overlord, he insisted that it should be divided in three equal shares among

¹ Dugdale-Caley, III, 503. For other references, see Birch, *Margam*, pp. 36, 171, 209, 211, 260, 296, 303; Birch, *Neath*, pp. 49, 58; Dugdale-Caley, v, 60; Van Lokeren, pt. I, 163, 178; *Lit. Cant.* I, 411; Thorne in Twysden, col. 2015; Neilson, *Bilsington*, p. 47; Hurter, II, 38; West's *Furness*, p. 142.

² *Decret. Greg.* lib. v, tit. i, c. 19; tit. xvii, c. 3; cf. *P.L.* CCXV, col. 643 (*Ep.* lib. VIII, 76).

³ Méray, *Libres Prêcheurs* (1878), II, 229.

⁴ *Excerpta*, p. 6.

the wife, the heir, and "his poor kinsfolk and the other poor". His horse fell in as a mortuary to the abbey: but Samson refused it, "because the man died intestate, and report accuses him of habitually lending his money at usury. By God's face, if any other such case befall in my days, the man shall not be buried in consecrated ground".¹

Another kindred, but far rarer source, was that of booty of war. For instance, the chartulary of Caunes, in southern France, shows not only the usual sources of burials and crusade-mortgages, but one other which is far more peculiar to that time and district. The Albigensian wars enabled the monks to acquire, whether directly or indirectly, the confiscated possessions of heretics, at as cheap a rate as the confiscated monastic possessions were destined to change hands in 1790. In 1231 the abbey bought, at a capital expenditure of 60 *livres*, possessions confiscated from thirty different knights and estimated at a total rental of 27 *livres*. And in 1240,² soon after the capitulation of Montréal, a still more significant transaction is recorded.³ The abbot and monks drew up a charter "in the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity" rehearsing how Christ died to free us all from sin, and how the abbey aspired to follow His example by freeing the inhabitants of Caunes "from a burden which they regard as intolerable"; that is, from an ancient law of inheritance which enabled the monks to seize all the possessions of all childless folk, even though these should make a will bequeathing their property to their kinsfolk. Up to this point, no document could be more altruistic in its tenor. Yet then the monks go on to explain that this is no free gift, but a remunerative business bargain, made by the advice of prudent men "in view of the exalted indemnity offered unto us" by the men of Caunes. These, in fact, gave the abbey 500 *livres* "which may serve you to buy from the King the lordships of the dispossessed knights". Forty years later, the abbey sold similar liberties to three more of its communes, and expended the accruing 300 *livres* on the purchase of fresh lands. All this was in exact accord with Innocent III's letters of 1204-5 to the king

¹ Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. p. 68.

² *Caunes*, p. 102: I give fuller details in Appendix. Other references to sources of income will be found on pp. 19, 46, 68, 80, 86, 100, 132, 133, 224.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 116ff.

of France, and of 1209 to Simon de Montfort, formally granting them all that should be or had been conquered from the heretics in southern France.¹ But, as the historian of Caunes notes, time brought its revenges and, at last in 1790, "the abbey was pillaged by the populace with a sort of savage fury". They burned all they could seize of the charters, badges of their long servitude, on that same square outside the abbey gates where, in 1226, the abbot had burned a "bishop" of the Albigensian heretics.

When the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa took Milan, "he consecrated the tithe of all the booty taken during his Italian campaigns to the monasteries of Italy and Germany". The abbey of Petershausen [near Constance] had 5 marks for its share.² Similarly, Ramiro I gave to Santiago de Compostela, in 844, all that he should conquer from the Moors.³ "Alphonso, king of Leon [1210], divided among the convents of his realm all the flocks which he took from his enemies; and, when they lacked food, he opened his granaries to them."⁴ The priory of Brecon enjoyed, among other endowments from Roger earl of Hereford, "the tithe of plunder taken in war from his enemies", in other words, from the neighbouring Welsh.⁵ The abbey of Stablo, in [1280] and [1310], did a certain amount of war and plunder on its own account.⁶ On the other hand, whereas it is reported that, in 1196, the emperor gave the General Chapter of the Cistercians £2000 from Cœur de Lion's ransom-money for making thuribles for every abbey of the Order: "yet the abbots, detesting both the emperor and his house, refused to accept his gift from money so disgracefully gained". Richard, in his lifetime, had been a great benefactor to the Order.⁷

¹ Migne, *P.L.* CCXV, cols. 362, 527; CCXVI, col. 151.

² Hurter, II, 23.

³ H. Florez, *España Sagrada*, XIX, 329.

⁴ Hurter, II, 42.

⁵ *Eiflia Sacra*, II, 53, 58.

⁶ Dugdale-Caley, III, 260 a, about A.D. 1150. This whole list of donations casts a vivid light on the quarrels which might easily arise from the earl's generous but unbusinesslike provisions.

⁷ Oxenedes, *Chronica*, R.S. pp. 65, 89.

CHAPTER XVIII

USURY, FORGERY AND DOMINATION

WE have seen that Religious can sometimes be found practising usury; but far more frequent were the cases in which they acted as receivers of such ill-gotten gains. Paulus Diaconus does indeed describe the care taken to avoid unjust acquisitions at Monte Cassino in his own day [790]. The abbot would say to the postulant:

Go and sell all that thou hast and give unto the poor, and come and follow Christ.

But if he answer "It is to this monastery that I would fain give my possessions", then let the abbot say: "Brother, by God's help we have no necessity for thy goods; for in our indigence we have sufficient. For there are others poorer than we, or even than our monastery; or perchance thy kinsfolk are poorer than we; therefore it is better that thou give for thy reward to those whose need is greater than ours." But if he say: "For the reward of my soul I would rather give to this monastery than to any other", then he should give his possessions either to the poor or to the monastery.¹

This was the attitude, again, which was taken by great saints and by all reformed Orders in their first fervour. The Cistercian *Institutions* of [1240] explicitly forbid the reception of gifts or endowments from excommunicate persons or public money-lenders.² Such a pious Cistercian of [1250] as Caesarius of Heisterbach emphatically repudiates the practice of endowing monasteries with money gained by robbery, usury, or larceny. "The monasteries of Religious do not profit by unclean alms of this kind, but rather they decay, since a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."³ In the almost contemporary *Dialogue between a Cistercian and a Cluniac*, the former insists upon the spiritual peril of accepting gifts from evil-doers or unconverted folk.⁴ Yet this was common enough. Ordericus Vitalis gives a very poor character to some of the most important benefactors of his

¹ Albers, III, 181.

² *Nomasticon Cisterciense*, p. 347.

³ Caes. Heist. *Hom.* IV, 245; cf. p. 158, and his *Dialogues*, I, 104, 106.

⁴ Martène, *Thesaurus*, v, 1583.

monastery: we may take almost at random the cases in *P.L.* CLXXXVIII, cols. 418, 419, 421. Petrus Cantor—Peter the Precentor of Notre-Dame at Paris—was one of the greatest and most saintly scholars who were ever attached to that church. Caesarius of Heisterbach tells a story to show his adherence to the counsel of perfection in this matter of endowments (*Hom.* I, 141):

In our own days, at Paris, there was a usurer of exceeding wealth, Theobald by name. This man had very many possessions, and an immensity of money, heaped together by usury. When he understood the way whereby he might flee from the wrath to come, he came in great compunction to Master Maurice [de Sully, 1160-96], bishop of that city, to whose counsel he submitted himself. The bishop, who was most zealous to build the minster of the Blessed Mother of God, counselled him to give his money to the fabric-fund of the church which was already begun. The usurer conceived some small suspicion of this counsel, and went to Master Petrus Cantor, to whom he reported the bishop's words. The precentor answered: "This is no good advice. Do thou rather go and cause the crier to cry throughout the whole city that thou art ready to restore to all men from whom thou hast taken aught beyond the bare principal."¹ Thus then he did, and came again to the precentor and said: "Master, my conscience beareth me witness that I have restored all ill-gotten gains; and yet there are many goods remaining." Then said the other: "Now thou canst give alms with a safe conscience."²

A similar case in the district of Siena had, however, a different issue.

A merchant of Monticiano, who in December 1270 provided by his will for the restitution of certain *mal tolte* and *ruberie* and *prede*, was advised by his confessor who was present (he was a white friar of the Cistercian order) that the pope, or Messer il Cardinale Penitenziere, had it in their power to absolve him from such like trivial sins. The suggestion was productive of good fruit, in that the penitent, thus prudently counselled, changed his mind, and on the contingency of the pardon left the sum in question to the [Cistercian] monastery of S. Galgano.³

¹ The Church of this time, as we have seen, still kept to the strict definition of usury formulated by all the early Fathers: it was a sin to take a single farthing beyond the principal lent. Caesarius did not quite live to see the modifications worked out by St Thomas Aquinas under pressure of evident economic necessities; modifications which, themselves, were presently almost as much neglected in practice as the liquor-prohibitions in modern America.

² *Hom.* I, 141.

³ Heywood, *Assempri*, p. 160, quoting from Professor Zdekauer. *Mal tolte* = things wrongly taken; *ruberie* = robberies; *prede* = preys. For Mr Heywood's "friar" read "brother".

Within less than a century of St Francis's death, the "spiritual" friars laid corpse-hunting, as well as legacy-hunting, to the charge of the mass of the community, the so-called "conventuals". Ubertino da Casale (defending on this point his master Petrus Johannis Olivi) speaks of it as sometimes practised

with evidence of greed and of *proprietas*¹ and of scandal to the clergy and an evil example to the people; as, for instance, when for lucre's sake usurers are received [for burial by the Franciscans] and rich folk and those who leave great legacies, and no care is taken for the poor; and when, on this account, friars stray abroad and wander uselessly, whereby their more spiritual duties are neglected, and enter into lawsuits in order to get funerals and funeral perquisites.²

We get specific instances from the episcopal visitors of Worms diocese in 1496. At Wimpfen am Berg,

All the parsons round here complain of the monks, that is the Friars Preachers, that they turn aside the folk from the parsons, saying: "Wherefore do ye confess to your parish priests, ye who have committed faults reserved to the Bishop for absolution? These priests have no power to absolve you; but come ye unto us, who have such authority." These Friars also receive public sinners, enjoining upon them some solemn penance in the monastery or convent of the said Friars.³

A similar report comes from Grossgartach near Heilbronn.

Jean Gerson [1420] speaks of the reception of ill-gotten endowments.⁴ In 1511 the prelates and clergy of the Canterbury province combined in an impassioned plea to the pope against abuses which were ruining religion in England. They specify the fact that friars, in consideration of sinners who make friends with them, absolve those whom the parson has excommunicated for their offences, and admit the guilty to Holy Communion. Moreover they not only offer their tombs to the excommunicate but "if perchance the bodies of such excommunicates have been inadvertently buried in Catholic graveyards, they intimidate the parsons lest they should cast them forth".⁵

¹ *I.e.* the forbidden possession of property.

² *A.L.K.G.* (1886), II, 402.

³ *Zeitsch. f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins* (1875), XXVII, 428.

⁴ *Opera* (1606), II, 449.

⁵ *Reg. Mayew*, p. 51.

One still more tainted source must just be mentioned. In Frankfort, three religious houses (including two friaries) owed part of their income to the rent of the municipal brothel; the Archbishop of Mainz had a similar income till 1457.¹ The later medieval Bishops of Winchester had similar rents from brothels in Southwark; but these were not officially licensed like the German houses.

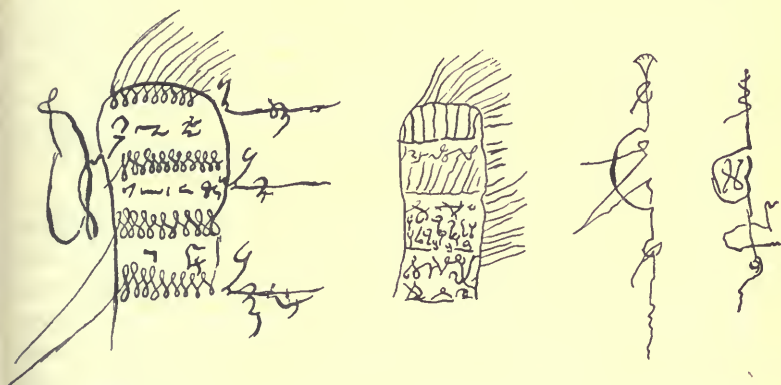
Finally, forgery plays no inconsiderable part in monastic acquisitions. Allowance must here be made on two points. In the first place, the forged charter sometimes represents a repetition, from memory or tradition, of something which may have rested upon a genuine document lost or destroyed; something of this kind may be pleaded in some instances. Again, the majority of forgeries bear less directly than indirectly upon the question of endowment; they do claim certain privileges which had a definite economic value, but are seldom concerned with land or rents which in fact had never been given. Behind those two mitigating considerations, the audacity and the frequency of medieval forgeries are astounding. As the late Dr Barry wrote: "To manipulate ancient writings, to edit history in one's own favour, did not appear criminal [to the medieval mind], if the end in view were otherwise just and good."² The same truth is put in far plainer language by an Anglican though sympathetic medieval scholar, Professor T. F. Tout, on p. 15 of his *Medieval Forgers and Forgeries* (1920). He points out how forgery ran rampant all through the Middle Ages. "Such great persons, such powerful societies, were accomplices in falsification that it required a rare share of public spirit for a humble critic to expose too coarsely their methods of manipulating documents." And on p. 6: "all practitioners of forgery had the 'benefit of clergy' . . . I do not find that the church courts ever took cognisance of forgery at all".

No instances, perhaps, have been more carefully worked out by modern scholars than those of the great imperial abbey of Reichenau on the Lake of Constance. Here the researches of scholars are summed up in Brandi's *Urkundenverfälschungen u.s.w.* Of the eight earliest Reichenau charters, seven are forged,

¹ Rudeck, p. 27.

² Rev. Canon Barry, D.D., *The Papal Monarchy*, p. 133.

and nineteen out of the first ninety-two (p. 32). The most active of the forgers was one Odalrich, who was *custos*, or sacristan, of the abbey in [1150]. The motives are described by the legist

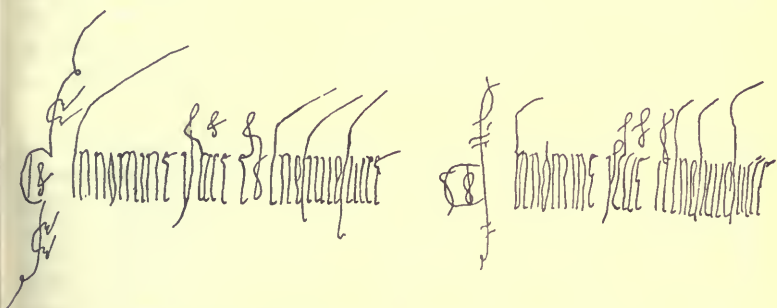


1 A

1 B

2 A

2 B



In nomine Scae et Individueae [Trinitatis]

3 A

3 B

Reichenau forgeries

In each case, A represents a genuine document, and B one of [1150] in which the forger has imitated the notarial marks and monograms and the script of earlier times. In No. 3, by far his most successful effort, he betrays himself chiefly in the long strokes, and by dividing his S almost at the top of the line, where the genuine script divides it at the bottom.

Aloys Schulte.¹ When a rivalry sprang up in Germany between the "reformers" and conservatives—between those abbeys which, like Hirschau, followed the stricter Cluniac ideal and the older Benedictine foundations which regarded St Benedict's

¹ *Der Adel u.s.w.* p. 214.

Rule as "somedead strait"—then many of these latter tried to make up for certain obvious disadvantages

by falsifications of charters. This was done on the largest scale at Reichenau, where [about A.D. 1150] an extremely skilful forger worked not only for his own abbey, but also for those of Kempten and Rheinau, for the baronial cathedral chapter of Strassburg, for the women's communities of Buchau and Lindau, and for the monastery of Stein... This is doubtless the most extensive forgery of that age. These were the documents with which the ancient abbeys answered the Hirschau monks.

For similar evidence at St-Trond, see vol. II, p. ii of the introduction to the chartulary of that monastery. Those of another great abbey—Molesme, the parent of Cîteaux—may be followed through Laurent's introduction to its chartulary, pp. 75-103. He justly emphasizes the difference between medieval and modern notions as to literary morality. From these we may turn to English cases. A lawsuit in the twelfth century between the two abbeys of Chertsey and Gloucester, for the possession of Cardigan priory, was important enough to engage the attention of two popes, two princes, and a king. It was supported on the Gloucester side

by some outrageous fabrications, which have caused me to give to this paper the alternative title "A Study in some Medieval Forgeries". Chertsey itself was not, I think, quite free from the guilt of fabricating documents... there was a good deal of forgery somewhere. When Sir Walter Scott made "Marmion", which was intended to be a medieval story, turn upon a forgery, his friend Dr Leyden wrote him a furious remonstrance against the impropriety of introducing such a motive into a tale of knighthood. A wider experience of medieval habits would have mitigated his objections, and a consideration of the Gloucester cartulary and registers most certainly leads to the conclusion that no writer need fear for the propriety of the introduction of a medieval forger into a story, so long as he represents him as a sufficiently clumsy one.¹

¹ H. E. Malden, in *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.* 1911, pp. 143, 155. For other monastic cases see Gervase, II, 132; *Grestain*, p. 58; Winter, *Cistercienser*, II, 17; *St-Martial*, p. 187; Zimmerman, p. 358; Goodwin, p. 57 (Bury St Edmund's); Berlière, *Honorius*, p. 245. A fifteenth-century prior of Montacute was accused of clipping and counterfeiting coin (Dugdale-Caley, v, 164). For a very close analogy to the Reichenau forgeries, see the account of a charter (professed date 1033) in *Bull. Inst. Stor. Italiano* (1896), XVIII, 76. Here, again, the forger betrays himself by exaggerating the peculiarities of earlier handwriting.

Archbishop Pecham [1280] was twice compelled to appeal to the Roman court against two semi-professional monastic forgers. He concludes his second complaint: "We mourn to relate that there are innumerable privileges in England fabricated by forgers, to the outrageous hurt of the state of the English Church. Unless inquisition be made into these things by men who cannot be corrupted by gold and silver, this will end in intolerable ruin to England."¹

With all these resources, the monks necessarily lost their original fellowship with the poor; they were naturally called "lords", *Domini*, a title which has become the *Dom* of modern Benedictinism. "The [later] monasteries could not be democratic institutions. . . . The majority [of the professed 'Religious'] could not but sympathize with the upper and middle classes, in a way altogether at variance with anything like a democratic spirit."² They were definitely among the capitalists; brilliantly unselfish capitalists at their best, unrespected or even despicable at their worst, but always capitalists. If it had not been for this, the Dissolution would be hardly explicable. If the monks of 1530 had been the monks of 1130, their spoliation would have met with insuperable popular resistance on principle, instead of local risings which were not concentrated on the monastic question. Abbé Blanchot, an ardent champion of monasticism, describes the Cistercians of 1500 in much the same terms as this Russian professor. He writes: "While they still give alms, yet they will [henceforth] remain in the wealthy class to which they belong, 'lords' [*domini*] as the people have so truly named them, and no longer poor monks as they had shown themselves in their first beginnings."³ This had already been expressed, centuries before, in one of our most valuable sources for Cistercian history, Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Homilies*.⁴ He says:

If we are in lawful possession of riches, that is no sin; yet it is a peril. Religion, as men are wont to say, hath begotten riches, and riches have destroyed Religion. Consider the ancient abbeys of St Benedict's Order; by reason of the exceeding [*nimiam*] religion that was in them, kings gave them many and untold lands, even

¹ *Epp.* R.S. I, 146, 192.

² Savine, p. 267.

³ Blanchot, p. 149.

⁴ Ed. 1615, III, 96-100 (*dom. XVI post Pent.*).

principalities with castles, cities, and vassals; which things, in process of time, have so far destroyed this same religion that those men who, in their days of poverty, were much more religious than [ordinary] religious folk, are now in some places even more worldly than the worldlings. Take note of the royal abbeys, Fulda, Werden, Prüm, and very many others; note how far religion flourishes there in these days! where, of old, there were multitudes of monks, there are now very few, and even these lack the necessities [of life]. Not long ago, as one of our lay brethren walked in the church of St Boniface's abbey of Fulda, and one of the monks of that place showed him the relics and treasures and the different choirs of the church, that monk said unto him: "Lo! Brother, there was once such a multitude of monks here that, as choir followed upon choir, there was no time of day or night which passed without God's praises; yet now we are scarce 18 brethren, and we lack bread to eat, and deservedly." Riches are like unto moths, which eat up the garments and then, when these are consumed, the moths themselves perish.... We sow and reap, filling our barns with grain and divers cellars with wine; cattle abound in our pastures and potherbs in our gardens, and to these are added the alms of the faithful, yet we are burdened with debts.

He says much the same in his *Dialogues*; and in another homily he writes: "By reason of poverty, or of some other necessity, many [*plures*] have come into our Order; men who certainly would not have come if they had possessed a livelihood in the world, or who could have lived honourably [*honeste*] there."¹ In all Orders of monks and canons regular, even the most strictly reformed, we soon find this contrast between humble poverty at the beginning, and supervening lordly wealth. It is anticipated even by St Augustine, in those counsels which men afterwards called his Rule. "Let not [the brethren] imagine themselves fortunate, because they have found food and raiment such as they were unable to find outside [the monastery]; nor let them stiffen their necks because they associate with those whom they did not venture to approach outside."² This is a danger upon which moralists harp all through the Middle Ages; and they are borne out by official documents. The reformed Grammontines, for instance, by their original rule of [1080], were forbidden to acquire lands beyond their own house estate, or even to possess herds of cattle; these, the Founder felt, would necessarily im-

¹ Vol. iv, p. 246; cf. p. 244.

² The Rule, Latin and English, may be found in J. W. Clark, *Observances of Augustinian Canons* (Cambridge, 1897), pp. 2 ff.

plicate them in worldly business and disputes. Innocent IV, in 1245, removed both these prohibitions.¹

Few, even nowadays, seem fully to realize the enormous wealth and power to which the monasteries thus attained, partly by lavish endowments from great folk, and partly by popular favour. I have dealt with this subject in Chapters III and IV of my second volume; but more is needed here to complete the picture.

We need only glance at those great Continental abbeys which were rather principalities than monasteries—Monte Cassino, Farfa, Polirone, St-Denis, Cluny, Santiago, Fulda, St Gallen and Reichenau. Among the many possessions of Reichenau, which may be taken as typical of that class, seems to have been practically all the Lake of Como, far off across the Alps: and we shall presently have occasion to look closer into that abbey. Aurillac was perhaps not quite in the front rank of French houses; yet in [800] it had an income of 80,000 *livres*; and, at its apogee, "the properties of the abbey, with its seignorial and spiritual rights, extended into 17 different dioceses, from Poitiers to Santiago de Compostela, and from the Pyrenees to Embrun in the Alps". A bull of 1289 "shows about 100 monasteries, priories, churches, chapels, etc., belonging to the abbey in those dioceses".² St-Bavon at Ghent "was a rich house, possessed of great goods and yearly revenues, both in lordships such as land and meadows and woods and so forth, more than beseemed monks, who were but thirty or thirty-six in number, at the very most; and their yearly goods and revenues came to more than 20,000 *karolus* of gold".³ The Cistercians of Dunes (Flanders) possessed more than 21,000 acres, with more than twenty "granges", or dependent agricultural colonies. Even in 1648, after inundations and religious wars, they drew 80,000 *livres* a year from only a part of their possessions.⁴ St-Germain-d'Auxerre possessed eight noble fiefs, the whole or part of fifty-five manors, and eighty dependent churches or chapels in

¹ E. Martène, *Antiq. Mon. Rit.* (1764), pp. 309, 310, c. 4; *P.L.* cciv, col. 1140.

² *Aurillac*, II, 82, 458.

³ Gachard, *Relation des Troubles de Gand* (Brussels, 1846), p. 108. The author, whose sympathies were strongly anti-Lutheran, wrote in 1541.

⁴ A. Heins, *Au Pays des Dunes* (Ghent, 1905).

eight different dioceses.¹ St-Vincent-de-Laon had a revenue of 3000 *livres* in 1284. There were between thirty and forty monks there in 1095, and fifteen in 1506: probably, therefore, there were less than thirty in 1284.² St Salvador at Madrid, in the seventeenth century, when it was reduced to a single monk, had a revenue of two million *livres*.³

In England, though such great abbeys as Westminster, Glastonbury, St Albans and Bury stood far below the wealthiest of their continental brethren; yet, even so, their possessions were sometimes enormous.

"The various acquisitions of property by the monks... during the long period of the abbey's existence", writes Mr W. T. Lancaster in his *Abstracts of the Chartulary of Fountains*, "were very large. By far the greater part of them were in the county of York, but the monks had also an estate of some magnitude in Cumberland, and possessions in one or two other counties. In Yorkshire their estates were very great. In Craven alone, Dr Whitaker estimates that this property—that part contained within a ring-fence, and exclusive of many out-lying lands—must have covered, upon a very moderate computation, a hundred square miles."⁴

A good deal of this, however, would be sheep-runs. At the Dissolution, apart from friaries, there were 433 men's houses and 121 nunneries. Their total gross income was about £160,000 or about £289 per house.⁵ This income, however, was very unequally distributed. Mr Snape has made an instructive analysis of the figures for Rouen province in [1250]: I give one group here in the *livres* of that day, and then, in square brackets, in English sterling of to-day, according to that index of 40 which I explain in my Appendix. There were 104 houses in all, with a total population of 1492 brethren. The seven richest, per head of monastic population, had 100 *livres* or more per monk [£1000]. At the other end of the scale, five houses had [£200] or less. The three most numerous classes were

¹ Henry, pp. 579-84.

² Wyard, pp. 211, 469, 520; see also Van Lokeren, pt. I, 118, 137; Henry, pp. 316-17, 337; Bulliot, p. 171; *St-Martial*, p. 190; *Cart. St-Trond*, I, 515 and II, 157.

³ Ch. Weiss, *L'Espagne depuis le règne de Philippe II* (Paris, 1844), II, 85.

⁴ Fletcher, p. 105: see the whole of his chapter IV for other Yorkshire abbeys.

⁵ For these figures see Savine, pp. 100, 270 ff.

fifteen houses with [£200 to £300] per monk; twenty-three with [£300 to £400]; nineteen with [£400 to £500]; nine with [£500 to £600]; and eleven with [£600 to £700]. These, of course, are gross incomes, from which all the inward and outward charges of the monastery had to be met.

Compare these with English figures at the Dissolution. Those houses which were suppressed in 1539, as having incomes under £200, numbered 318. Of the rest, fourteen ran from £1000 to £1500; five between £1500 and £1849, and eleven from £1849 to £3912 (Westminster, the richest of all).¹ These sums, in 1536-9, if the index for which I argue in my Appendix be admitted, should be multiplied by at least twenty if we would represent to the modern reader what they looked like to a man of 1530. It will thus be seen that the smaller houses, though they were great and solid and commodious beyond all other buildings with the exception of castles and a few great manor-houses, did not lord it over the countryside in the sense which we may predicate (for instance) of St Mary's at York, walled round like a little city leaning against the great city at its side.

For the impression made by these buildings upon contemporaries we have abundant evidence both from friends and from critical outsiders. Let us first hear a critic: a Lollard, it is true, but no puritan, for it is evident that he fully appreciated the beauties; and no liar, for he is describing what might be found in many great cities, where his hearers could judge for themselves, and, in all probability, it was a London audience for which he wrote.² He is describing the splendour of a Dominican friary, not as reprehensible in itself, but as contrasting crudely with the privations of the real poor:

Then fared I into fraytour, and found there another, [refectory]
An hall for a high king an household to holden,
With broad boards about y-benched well clean,
With windows of glass wrought as a church.
Then walked I further, and went all abouten,
And saw hallës full high, and houses full noble,

¹ There were 44 monks in the abbey and its cells at the time (E. H. Pearce, *Monks of Westminster*, p. x). Thus the endowment was about [£1770] per head.

² It is noteworthy that, as early as 1250, the Dominican General Chapter, held in London, found three cases of excessive expense in building (*Act. Cap. Gen.* III, 54). For the Cistercians, see Appendix.

Chambers with chimneys, and chapels gay,
 And kitchens for an high king in castles to holden,
 And their dortour y-dight with doorës full stronge, [dormitory
 Fermery and fraitur, with fele mo houses,

[infirmary, refectory, many
 And all strong stone wall, stern upon high,
 With gay garrets and great, and each hole y-glazed,
 And other houses, enow to harbour the queen.

And yet these builders will beggen a bag-ful of wheat
 Of a pure poor man, that may onethe pay [scarcely
 Half his rent in a year, and half be behind!¹

It was natural that Wyclif and his disciples, casting about for a nickname, should call the abbeys "Cain's Castles".

The author of *Piers Plowman*, on the other hand, was no Lollard. He commends the friars in so far as they help the poor, and build only with their superfluous endowments; but in the same breath he rebukes lords and ladies for disinheriting their kinsfolk in favour of "such as be rich", *i.e.* the older Orders.²

Those two were outsiders—even, if you will, envious outsiders—but now let us hear a famous novice-master of [1250] and an abbot of [1300] addressing their fellow-Cistercians. Caesarius of Heisterbach was distressed at "the great and lofty horses or chariots, wherewith Religious ride who have left the world for Christ: moreover, those lofty and superfluous buildings also which they inhabit; wherein they do much to scandalize and ruin secular folk, and fall under their judgement". He points out that these luxuries bring them also into friendship and partnership with unworthy worldlings.³ Abbot Justus, fifty years later, speaks even more strongly.

Our predecessors, upon this foundation [of humility and willing poverty], raised a similar structure of humble buildings... We of to-day build not humble structures, but spacious and beautiful halls. Our habitations, in themselves, are like unto cities... Who does not see the superfluity of our edifices, and marvel at the sight? As to their art, Daedalus would seem to have imagined them; as to their greatness, the giants would seem to have laboured; as to the cost, Solomon would seem to have paid the expense. Again, where is the

¹ *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, ll. 203 ff. The friaries were, in fact, frequently used for great assemblies such as parliaments, councils, or university meetings.

² B, 310 ff. See Appendix.

³ *Hom.* iv, 30; cf. p. 127.

court or the cause or the council or the colloquy whereat one of our monks is not present? Except for carnal indulgence, we have every constituent of worldly good; and this indulgence is repressed in some by the love of God, in others by the fear of disgrace, and in others by appetite for honour; and the man who serves decency only through shame or desire of honour has not yet even begun a true monk's life... We take back those things which we had left; nay, we usurp, under cloak of the cowl, things which in the world we could never have gotten.¹

Here we have almost the very words of the satirical archdeacon Walter Map, who had written: "Does not the church seem to be the prey of its own monastery? and is it a cloister or a castle that these [monks] have joined?"²

In Map, again, we must confess a man who did not love the Cistercians: but Petrus Cantor [1170] is one who cannot thus be dismissed. This famous precentor of Notre-Dame writes indignantly against

monastic or ecclesiastical buildings constructed from the money-lendings and usuries of avaricious folk, from the lies of deceivers and the deceptions of liars, hireling preachers. These buildings, raised from ill-gotten gains, oftentimes fall into ruin; for, as Ovid saith, "a sordid prey hath no good ending". Again, we may take an example from St Bernard, who wept when he saw the thatched hovels of the shepherds, like unto the first cottages of the Cistercians, who were then beginning to dwell in stone-built palaces furnished with stalls. Yet oftentimes the Religious themselves, like other folk, are punished by means of their own offence; for this building of fair and ample buildings is an invitation to proud guests. Even their granges are often fortified for defence like castles; and, lest they should lose these, they often conceal the truth and neglect God's justice, not daring to murmur against the great folk; thus they have lost their liberty, as Juvenal saith "the penniless wayfarer will sing in the robber's presence". This they have lost for the sake of their wealthy granges and lands, suffering robbers and usurers to build them dormitories and refectories, in token and eternal memorial of their greed. Nay, they should not have suffered such to be built even from the money truly appertaining to good men; but they should rather have exhorted such to turn their money to feed the poor and redeem the captives.³

¹ Justus Abbas, in *Magna Bibliotheca Patrum*, xiv, 2, 3.

² *De Nugis*, tr. James, p. 58.

³ Migne, *P.L.* ccv, col. 257.

The Franciscan Bishop Alvarez Pelayo bears strong testimony on the same side.¹

Such criticisms from orthodox churchmen might be multiplied. No serious attempt at rebuttal, I believe, was made until the fourteenth-century heretics turned this into a political question; and, even so, a learned and resolute anti-Lollard like Netter of Walden shows far less confidence in his apology than Caesarius and Justus and Petrus Cantor and Alvarez had shown in their attack. What shocked thinking men, though it often impressed the multitude, was precisely that contrast between professional poverty and bourgeois solidity even in the smallest house, with feudal display in nearly all. On the one hand, when an Abbot of Clairvaux was made cardinal-bishop of Albano, and spent liberally upon his old monastery, the grateful monks extolled him in verse as one who had relieved the indigence of "us poor folk".

Hinc presul factus Albano cardine dignus
Pauperibus nobis is bona plura dedit.²

Yet Clairvaux was built like a palace and endowed like a great barony. In the pseudo-Chaucerian *Tale of Beryn*, when the pilgrims find themselves in the great church at last, what interests them is not so much the saints in the windows, as the coats of arms. Sir Thomas Lovel was the second founder of Haliwell in Middlesex; and his generosity was commemorated "in most of the glass windows of this house", where every passer read:

All ye nuns of Haliwell
Pray ye both day and night
For the soul of Sir Thomas Lovel
Whom Harry the Seventh [made] knight.³

The friars in *Piers Plowman* promised a sure place in heaven to Mede, if she would glaze their great window: but the author opines that "pride is painted there and pomp of the world".⁴ The great medieval museum of modern Paris is the Hôtel de Cluny, a palace fit for a king, built as a town-house for the greatest abbot of France. In England, as Montalembert pointed out, we have retained, in spite of the Reformation, a far larger proportion than France of our medieval monastic buildings. We

¹ *De Planctu Ecclesiae*, f. 210 a.

² *Revue Mabillon* (1929), XIX, 308.

³ Dugdale-Caley, IV, 39.

⁴ A, III, 49; B, III, 64.

have not only, here and there, a mansion like the prior's house at Wenlock, but far more domestic remains, even behind post-Reformation changes, within the precincts of our cathedrals.¹ Even the minor adjuncts of these great abbeys, where they have survived, are monumentally impressive; the dependent cell, or the grange, or the tithe-barn. Professor Bloch has worked out, from the account of Abbot Suger of St-Denis himself [1150], the conception of a model manor as organized by a great monastery.

A house, preferably "strong and built for defence", to lodge the monks deputed for the management of the manor, and wherein the abbot himself may "lay his head" in the course of his rounds of inspection; a garden and a few fields for the support of the permanent or temporary guests in this house; barns for the tithe-sheaves or those that come in as rent; stalls or sheepfolds for the lord's flock which doubtless has its share of common pasture and whose dung is profitable for the gardens and the abbot's ploughland; and finally, an occasional fishpond or vineyards... In short, both an administrative centre and a more or less specialized farm, important certainly, but such that a little troop of servants, with a little forced labour into the bargain, may suffice to work it; something quite different in extent and in purpose from the immense agricultural enterprises of former times,

e.g. under Charles the Great.²

Within these lordly buildings, and begirt with such lordly privileges, it was only natural that monastic prelates should sometimes forget monastic humility; and the oftener (monks themselves assure us) when they happened to have risen from the lower ranks of society. The following quotation might be matched by very many others; I choose it because England was perhaps the most law-abiding country in Christendom, and the author was an earnest Anglo-Catholic who held no brief against monasticism.³ He is speaking of the Cistercian abbey at Dieulacres.

The abbot's court was sometimes attended by as many as three or four hundred persons. His gallows stood at the end of the town, and his fair was held at Leek annually for seven days at the Feast of

¹ For Wenlock see the elevation and plan in my vol. II, p. 38 (where, however, by a slip, I call this Cluniac priory an abbey). For Ely, Mr T. D. Atkinson has made an exhaustive and most valuable study (Camb. Univ. Press, 1933).

² P. 102.

³ Hibbert, *Diss.* p. 101.

St Arnulph (July 28th). He was a county magnate of importance, and even so late as 1504 we find him stipulating in the lease of the Manor of Pulton that he was to be entertained there with twelve mounted companions twice a year. Such a position was dangerous, and it is not surprising to find that the Abbot sometimes carried things with a high hand. In 1379 it was alleged against the Abbot that he attempted "to perpetrate maintenance in his marches" (*in marchiis suis manutenenciam facere*) and to oppress the people. He had a band of twenty-one retainers, who are described as common disturbers of the King's peace, living at the Abbey and doing all the mischief they can, lying in wait for travellers, assaulting, maiming, and even killing them. Some of them were captured on the definite charge of murdering John de Warton at Leek, and were committed to the Marshalsea, with Edmund de Draycot, Cellarer at Dieulacres, and William del Brugge, Vicar of Leek, who, with the Abbot, had harboured the murderers. But the Abbot managed to delay proceedings again and again, and finally no one was punished. In 1413 a monk of Dieulacres, with a large number of armed men, raided a neighbouring park, and took by force much stone, the Abbot being privy to the deed. The Abbot in question was Richard Whitmore, and one of the armed men who led the expedition was Adam Whitmore, Knight. Abbot Whitmore was frequently engaged in quarrels with his neighbours, as was his successor, John Goodfellow. He once stole goods worth £40, and once engaged in a riotous attack on the Vicar of Ilam, who had given the tithes to a neighbour he disliked.

When the Commissioners visited Dieulacres the Abbot was Thomas Whitney, and subsequent events showed he inherited the spirit and vigour of his predecessors.

CHAPTER XIX

MONASTIC ARISTOCRACY

MONASTICISM was thus offered the eternal choice between God and Mammon; and the temptation in many cases was irresistible. "Experience, like a sea, soaks all-effacing in"; the sandy ramparts between cloister and world were gradually broken or even obliterated. Only the most exceptional force of character could enable a great abbot to keep his contemplative freedom of soul; in most cases, we may almost say that the thing was physically impossible. St Bernard does indeed congratulate Abbot Suger of St-Denis for his somewhat tardy conversion and the regularity which he has brought into that royal cloister; but those same letters show us the worldliness of his earlier rule. The cloister had been a semi-royal palace haunted by knights and litigants: to St Bernard's mind, a mere "synagogue of Satan". The abbot had ridden abroad with 60 horses or more in his train: "to see them on the road, you would say that they are no fathers of abbeys but lords of castles; not rulers of souls but princes of provinces".¹ So the chronicler of St-Martial records complacently the pompous public homage paid by the viscount of Limoges, son to duke Arthur of Brittany, for the two castles which he held from the abbot.² One Scottish abbey, Crosraguel, enjoyed for a short time one of the rarest of *regalia*, the right of minting money, which can be traced to no other British monastery since the Norman Conquest.³

England, indeed, shows far better than the Continent on this point. Abbot Leofric of St Albans, himself of high birth [990-1030] is described by Matthew Paris in his *Lives of the Abbots* as "an accepter of persons; for he admitted to the monastery no man who was not of noble race or at least of lawful birth, asserting that men of common race and illegitimates, especially if they were unknown and unstable, were more prone to great

¹ *Ep.* 78, and *Apol. ad Guil.* § 11 (P.L. CLXXXII, cols 193 and 914).

² *St-Martial* (1307), p. 143.

³ See Sir George Macdonald's paper in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scotland* (1919-20), vi, 20ff. The evidence comes from the reign of James III; the mint was probably suppressed by James IV.

faults" [*enormia*].¹ But the chronicler evidently regards this man as exceptional in his exclusiveness. Naturally enough, the nobleman had a better chance than the common man in almost every monastery, but seldom in England was there any such definite attempt to insist upon class distinctions. I think we may draw a healthy inference in the opposite direction from an abbey almost as great as St Albans. In 1337 the prior of Canterbury wrote to the archbishop, begging that five of his novices might be allowed to take the vows before their year of probation was finished: "otherwise, as I fear, some one of them, unless his urgent petition be granted, might fly off into the world". To this the archbishop answered, "we cannot presume that these have entered into Religion with good intentions, nor that they will ever profit therein; wherefore, if they are willing to go forth for the cause you specify, let them go forthwith with God's curse and Ours".²

Yet, even where the distinction of birth was ignored or minimized, wealth raised the same problem in a different form. Von Arx³ quotes a case as early as [1250], where the abbey of Comburg had a rule of electing no abbot but from families of knightly rank. A Provincial Chapter at Erfurt in 1456 fought against this growing custom as one of the abuses of the time; and in 1459 all the prelates present renounced such rights so far as their own persons were concerned. But the abuse rather grew than decreased, even though it frustrated its own purpose.

They [the monks] felt themselves not only honoured by connexion with noble families, but also better protected. Yet times change; extravagance penetrated into the cloister; these noble-born abbots began to look upon the monastic endowments as their own property; they did not choose to fall behind their worldly kinsfolk in number of servants, splendour of furniture, costliness of horses and trappings, and multitude of hounds or hawks. The [abbot's] family needed and demanded every kind of support, which it received through allowances of ready money or partition of monastic estates, which from this time onward were practically lost to the monastery. The noble abbot held it beneath his dignity to look after the domestic economy himself; he left it to unfaithful officials. The last noble abbot of Andhausen,

¹ *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. I, 31.

² *Lit. Cant.* R.S. II, 156. See also pp. 160-3, 216, 245-8.

³ Von Arx, II, i, 463 ff.

Georg v. Sontheim, suffered lifelong imprisonment for these and other offences; and the convent resolved to elect no more nobles for the future. Yet things did not mend on that account under his *bourgeois* successors. Even these middle-class abbots had families to look after, and sometimes to raise from the dust, or at least to bring them to such rank that they needed not to be ashamed of them. They had imbibed the taste for building just as strongly as the nobles; and possibly their practice in the fine arts had formed their taste better; and now they found themselves possessed of the means to satisfy their leanings. Moreover, experience shows how dangerous it is to raise anyone suddenly from poverty and subjection to wealth and honour.

It is a commonplace among moralists that, when a man of mean birth has arrived at an abbacy or bishopric or cardinalate, a whole tribe of relations come and expect help from him.¹ In [1320] the Abbot of Echternach procured an imperial rescript making him feudal lord both of the abbey and of the town, with its numerous privileges. "From that time forward", writes the historian, "the rank of abbot became the aim of ambitious wire-pullers, who struggled for worldly power and neglected the inner life of the abbey."²

But such *parvenu* abbots, though not infrequent, are exceptional in these great houses. Life in the cloister was, indeed, a school of manners, and Richard of Wallingford, the blacksmith's son, might become one of the greatest abbots of St Albans; but this baronial position went far more often to men of gentle or well-to-do birth. On the Continent, indeed, this principle acted far more strongly than in England. "Abbots were noble lords in the thirteenth century; and it is under that aspect that we must henceforth regard them."³ During the first two centuries of the existence of Molesme, "almost all [its abbots] belonged to baronial families, after the example of the bishops and other abbots of that period".⁴ Or, if we pass to another Burgundian abbey not far distant, "It will be seen that the monks of St-Germain-d'Auxerre cling always to the principle of getting an abbot from the great nobility... The manners and the

¹ E.g. Pépin, *Sermones*, f. 26 c.

² *Eiflia Sacra*, I, 496.

³ Abbé Blanchot, p. 105.

⁴ *Cartulaire de Molesme*, I, 183.

interests of the [fifteenth] century had long since perverted the Rule of St Benedict, which prescribes that birth should never be counted for admissibility to honours." Presently, even the monks of this abbey were drawn only from the nobility or, at least, from the upper classes.¹

Here, again, the movement was natural and almost inevitable; a movement upwards in social status, and downwards in religion. There had, it is true, been times and places where the monks were often noble in both senses. The nineteen barons and knights who took the cowl at Molesme in its palmy days form a striking list.² But these men brought wealth; and a condition of settled wealth begat a non-Benedictine spirit. This was very clearly exposed a few years ago by the late Dom Ursmer Berlière, the most learned of scholars in Benedictine constitutional history; he filled five pages with a list of abbeys confined to the nobility.³ But, even earlier, the matter had been worked out for Germany by Professor Aloys Schulte. When this writer first emphasized the extent to which this system of "nobility" had prevailed in great German abbeys, it was assumed that this must have been a comparatively late abuse in medieval monasticism. But he went on to produce strong evidence for the contrary conclusion, that some of the greatest and most famous had been actually founded on this principle; and that, if it was abandoned in the later medieval centuries, this was only when the abbeys had been reduced by "noble" mismanagement to the merest shadow of their former selves.⁴ Reichenau, for instance, one of the wealthiest of all, had in 1427 only its new abbot and two novices, viz. a young count who was "a sickly man of his body", and a baron. It was the first of the abbot's reforming measures to send these two adrift, since neither manifested any desire to take his vocation seriously: but the house never recovered anything like its earlier prosperity, and it was dissolved in 1535 by the Bishop of Constance.⁵

For the earlier days of Reichenau, Schulte has shown con-

¹ Henry, pp. 343, 374.

² *Cart. Molesme*, I, 121 ff.

³ *Mém. Acad. Roy. Belgique* (1924), Classe des Lettres, XVIII; compare my second volume, pp. 55-62, and Berlière, *Honorius*, p. 462.

⁴ *Der Adel u.s.w.* pp. 1, 2: see also references on next five pages.

⁵ Brandi, *Geschichtsschreibung*, pp. 133, 137.

clusively that, but for a few possible exceptions, the monks were all noble from 1165, whence we have the earliest full records, down to the fourteenth century. Moreover, this comes out expressly from contemporary descriptions by the monks themselves or their neighbours. In 1029 they are described as "from the abbey's foundation onwards [*i.e.* from A.D. 724] exclusively sons of counts and barons"; in 1325 a petition to the pope rehearses how "at the abbey of Reichenau there are not, nor ever have been, any monks that are not born of illustrious fathers and other nobles" (p. 3).

That this was not unusual in the Empire, we learn from a medieval treatise which speaks of "those Benedictine monasteries, especially the exempt abbeys, wherein the custom is to receive sons of counts and barons" (p. 4). At Waldkirch, not very far from Reichenau, the only twelve names of abbesses or nuns which have survived are all noble. Soon after 1428 the abbey is recorded as absolutely empty since the recent death of the last abbess (p. 5). At the nunnery of Säckingen fifty-nine members are known; all were of noble birth but three, who were of the upper middle class (*ministeriales*). At the Fraumünster of Zürich, a diploma of Innocent VII (1406) shows the nuns as "of illustrious birth; or at least daughters of counts; nor are women of lower nobility or rank admitted as sisters". The last abbess, in 1524, lived alone in the great convent (p. 7). At Einsiedeln, a still more famous abbey, Pius II confirmed the ancient limitation of monks to "noble and illustrious families, provided always that the numbers in the monastery be sufficiently maintained". Here, again, the last medieval abbot died in 1531, with only one monk to keep him company in the abbey. At St Gall, another imperial abbey, the fifty-four names which we can gather with certainty from 1200 to 1419 are, with one single exception, noble (p. 107); and we have reason to believe that this was so as early as the ninth century (p. 109). One of the many noble nunneries was Ruppertsberg near Bingen, founded in 1147 by the noble St Hildegard, the great prophetess of that age (pp. 226ff.). An abbess wrote to her asking how this exclusiveness could be justified in the face of the Acts of the Apostles and 1 Cor. i, 26. The saint replied that God Himself had ordained the class system in society, and that Satan and

Adam had both fallen by striving for things above themselves. She continued:

What man assembles all his beasts in the same stall—oxen and asses, sheep and goats? Would they not disperse? Therefore let us have discretion therein, lest divers folk, congregated together in one single flock, be scattered by the pride of elation and the shame of diversity, and, especially, lest decency of manners be broken there, while they tear each other in hatred when the higher rank falls below the lower¹ and the lower climbs above the higher; for God maketh a distinction between His people on earth, as He doth also in heaven, to wit, angels, archangels, thrones, and so forth.²

Even when the baronial monopoly broke down, monasteries were still reserved, in many cases, for the lower nobility (pp. 244 ff.). In Westphalia, "the greater part of the nunneries founded before 1300 came into the hands of the lower nobility". And Schulte quotes from the special researches of Linneborn, while warning us that the verdict may be rather too severe: "Even the other convents are so thoroughly occupied, from the first, by daughters of noble houses, that we must look upon the admission of non-noble nuns as an exception." In 1500 a young canon wrote of the collegiate church of St Alban at Mainz: "They exclude such candidates as might be received into the college of cardinals; nay (to speak in jest) if our Lord and Saviour were now on this earth, he would be rejected from their community because, not being of knightly race on both sides, he would be a menace to the honour and the dignity of that institution."

As Schulte reminds us, this custom fits ill with the Christian spirit; yet it had its respectable, if not strictly religious, side. The Reichenau chronicler Öheim [1500] "though he plainly depicts the evil times, is filled with reverence; these noble brethren still inspire him with respect" (p. 8). After all, there was the medieval rule which "made free birth a necessary condition for priestly Orders, as Canon Law formally prescribes even nowadays".³ All this, and a great deal more of detailed

¹ Reading *subter* for *super*, as the sense seems plainly to require.

² Migne, *P.L.* cxcvii, col. 336.

³ This, like other medieval rules, was not kept in all its strictness. One of Charlemagne's capitularies shows that many serfs' sons came to the priesthood. In *Piers Plowman*, "since bondmen's sons have been made bishops... and soapsellers and their sons for silver have been knighted... life-holiness and love have been long hence in this degenerate world" (c. vi, 72).

evidence which he produces, leads up to the final conclusion of Schulte's Appendix (p. 31): "The Dark Ages and the Middle Ages proper were far, far more aristocratic than they are ordinarily visualized; the [German] empire of those days was a class-state in favour of the free nobility. And this was suffered because the class-distinctions were regarded as a natural necessity." This he traces specially to the ancient Germanic spirit, remarking pertinently: "so far as we can see nowadays, no other country shows so sharp a preference given to the nobility" (p. 92). And again (p. 228): "Difficult as it is to reconcile the baronial abbeys with the spirit of Canon Law, yet it is equally easy to fit them into the spirit of German jurisprudence." Again, the Benedictine Rule gives no excuse for "noble" abbeys (p. 83); nor do any of those minor Rules which were gradually superseded by the Benedictine. The first papal pronouncement on the system was by Gregory IX in 1227 (p. 89). True, the pope reprobates this exclusiveness in the case of the Strassburg Cathedral Chapter, without explicitly extending his disapproval to the abbeys; but it is significant that his agent on this occasion was a Cistercian cardinal; the Cistercian reform was in necessary antagonism to aristocratic exclusiveness in the cloister. Yet even that, when it lost its old fervour, was powerless against this exclusive tradition; Schulte notes that Cistercian, Premonstratensian, and even Franciscan foundations sometimes gave way, just as the Cluniac reform had given way earlier in Germany (pp. 246-7, 299, and App. 29, 30).

If reformers themselves were powerless here, it was because the Middle Ages were extraordinarily patient.... No axe was laid to the decrepit institutions; they slowly decayed. No Council or Reichstag or King or Pope ever dreamed of revolutionizing these ancient imperial abbeys. A group of nobles, dwindling to nothingness, sufficed to defend them; so great was respect for law and reverence for age; so powerful was tradition. If there had been a Benedictine Congregation,¹ it would doubtless have interfered; but [in Germany] each monastery stood on its own bottom; royalty had lost all power of forcing reform upon them, while the courts of popes and bishops had never gained such power. Renewal was impossible so long as there still existed a "conventus" in the abbey: that is, so

¹ Such, for instance, as existed in England and did much to maintain our monasteries at a higher level.

long as there were still a handful who had actually taken the vows. At Werden, the Congregation of Bursfeld never attained to their goal [of reform] until the only being left in the cloister was the abbot (1474).¹

The result of this sterilization of so many nobles—sterilization, that is, for all honourable purposes—was obviously deleterious to the nobility. Schulte quotes a case where a boy was driven by his elder brother's stripes and threats to take Holy Orders and thus cut himself off from claims to inheritance (p. 283; cf. p. 285). On pp. 275 ff. he traces statistically, from existing records, the proportion of such celibates in a large number of noble families. The enormous majority of medieval German bishops were of noble race (pp. 289, 351-2). "The ancient and reverend homes of divine worship became the graves of the old German nobility" (p. 293).

In another essay Schulte points out how naturally this condition had grown up in Germanic society during the early Middle Ages.

This has often been judged as though the nobles, like young cuckoos, had driven the non-noble out of these chapters and these abbeys. But, since I have been able to show, by irrefragable evidence, that these spiritual institutions were exclusively intended for the higher nobility from the very first, and had been founded for them, this judgement must be revised. It was not only in the State that the exalted places were reserved for the free nobility; the same rule held good for the episcopal sees and for the most powerful and famous collegiate churches and monasteries. We have here not arbitrary decision but an ancient law; we have the Germanic conceptions of Church life, which might stand in contradiction to other religious conceptions, but which, in Germany, were not felt to be unjust.²

The rich abbey of Murbach in Alsace was pretty certainly limited to nobles as early as [1280]. It is apparently on that account that the Dominican annalist of Colmar brands the then abbot as *destructor religionis*.³ For we find everywhere the sort of evidence which Schulte has emphasized above; social exclusiveness bred decay. In the early fourteenth century

¹ Schulte, *Der Adel u.s.w.* p. 242. At St Gallen, in [1400], two only were left (p. 243).

² *Sitzungsb. d. Bayerischen Akad.* 1919, Phil.-Hist. No. 8, p. 52.

³ Gatrio, I, 330 (for the abbot's princely state see pp. 332 ff.); *Ann. Colmar*, p. 38.

Reichenau pleaded for the appropriation of two more parish churches on the ground that the monks, from time immemorial, had all been of the race of princes, counts, and barons, and that the abbey income was no longer sufficient for them.¹ St-Claude, at one time one of the richest abbeys in Europe, had fallen before the end of the fourteenth century to a quarter, at most, of its earlier numbers. Benoît's calculations would reduce them to one-tenth; and he points out that, even with its diminished revenues, the abbey might have supported 300 brethren leading a life of real self-sacrifice. Yet here, in 1393, were only 36, and Abbé Benoît writes:

Now that 36 monks will be charged with the administration of a vast territory, how will they defend themselves against the invasion of worldly business, and keep the taste for retirement and silence? . . . Will they not be rather administrators than contemplatives? . . . The abbey buildings are immense: in the nineteenth century they serve to lodge more than 200 persons. In the days of fervour, they contained a whole population of monks. . . . They cannot be left empty; the monks will now distribute them; each will have his own private residence. So now we see each of the monks of St-Claude enjoying a sort of monastic prebend, with his own house and servants and a whole household. . . . [Then the nobles] will envisage these monastic posts as so many fiefs, fit for nobles alone; the sons of the people will be shut out, and patricians alone admitted; the ancient abbey of saints will become an *abbaye noble*.²

He traces the beginnings of this revolution as far back as 1271, and his picture is borne out by the story of St Gall, as summarized by Joachim v. Watt [1530]: "He who had many children made a part of them into squire-parsons (*Pfaffenjunker*) and canons and nuns, in order that the rest might be the better provided for, without considering whether the child were pious, learned, wise, good or wicked."³

Nunneries suffered at least as much here as the men's houses; for the temptation to get rid of superfluous girls was even stronger than in the boys' case. We have seen St Hildegard's

¹ Brandi, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. xiv. Compare the chronicler Öheim's words, *ibid.* p. 123.

² *St-Claude*, I, 545 ff.

³ Aloys Schulte, *Der Adel u.s.w.* p. 290. Watt (in Latin, *Vadius*) had very definite Protestant leanings, but had studied the original records very thoroughly, and was an exceptionally accurate and critical writer for his time. See *Allgemeine Deutsche Biog.* XLI, 242.

defence of the system; and parallel concrete cases may be found everywhere on the Continent. The Duke of Silesia, in [1220], founded a nunnery at Trebnitz which took fifteen years to build and cost 30,000 marks; he is said to have endowed it with enough revenues for the livelihood of 1000 persons, but this is probably a medieval exaggeration.¹ The three nunneries of Cologne were so exclusive that they did not admit even the daughters of the richest citizens; of men who could buy graves for themselves in the nunnery churches, and found chantries there.²

Protests arose sometimes from pious and zealous contemporaries. The *Antiquiores Consuetudines Cluniacensis Monasterii* were compiled by a distinguished monk, [St] Udalricus. [1080], for the use of St William, Abbot of Hirschau, who was working for the reform of his own house and of other great German abbeys. The author's preface is very outspoken as to the evil effects of monastic wealth and recruitment by interest rather than by religious calling. He writes:

I am sometimes stirred also by the very glad and pleasant memory of your promise that you would beware of the machinations of certain worldly folk, who care little for aught else than this fleeting life alone, and, having gotten their houses full, so to speak, of sons and daughters, or, again, if any of their brood be lame or maimed, deaf or blind, hunchbacked or leprous, or so deformed otherwise that the world is less ready to receive the child, then they offer it most eagerly to God for the monastic state; although this be plainly not for God's sake, but solely for the sake of avoiding their education and nurture, or of providing better for their other children. Therefore (to say nothing of those who are not lacking in health of body or limb), let us speak of those who are such half-human or half-living creatures as we have often seen [thrust into the monasteries].³ If it were expedient, I could readily name one who was drawn into the holy monastic habit by no other holiness than the disgrace of scrofula, or another by his [misshapen] foot; From both of these, as you yourself can bear witness, little indeed hath proceeded of good example; how much less, then, from those who are in good health, wheresoever they are congregated in such numbers and with such power as to get the whole conduct of the abbey into their hands! All men know, who can see the houses wherein this sort of monk reigns, what manner of life is

¹ Hurter, II, 14-16.

² Aloys Schulte, in *Sitzungsb. d. Bayerischen Akad. Phil.-Hist.* 1919, p. 38.

³ The text in this and the next sentence is obviously corrupt in places; but the general sense is plain enough.

led there, and how far the discipline of the Rule is kept. It is notorious and general that, if any strictness of this spiritual warfare can be found in these days of ours, the dregs of all time, this is only in places where those monks are more in number and greater in authority who have renounced the world and offered themselves to Christ's service not in wanton youth, nor at their parents' bidding, but of their own free will, in more advanced years, at His command alone... You, by God's mercy, have decreed for your own abbey that this sort of worldly folk must find themselves some other nest wherein to lay their misbegotten fledglings, bereft of worldly heritage. God sees to it that, in this abbey of yours, nothing is henceforward to be gained by that familiar device whereby (to speak with the Prophet) they lay their eggs of asps, destined to be hatched into basilisks, and to be committed unto pious and God-devoted souls, whom they treacherously use for handmaidens and nurses. Let each man think here as he will; for mine own part, I am certain that you have utterly extirpated that root wherefrom alone hath proceeded the main ruin of all monasteries which have been ruined, whether in lands of German speech or of French or Italian or Spanish—in *Romana lingua*.¹

In England, again, where feudalism was weaker and Church life more regular than the continental average, we find a struggle for some efficient remedy. A chronicler of St Augustine's at Canterbury writes: "Forasmuch as some abbots, led by carnal affection and also constrained by the importunities of rich and powerful folk in those parts, were wont, at their own unbridled will, to bestow the cowl upon boys who had scarcely been weaned, to the scandal of Religion and the detriment of the abbey", therefore the monks obtained in 1168 the privilege that no boy should be received until his fifteenth year.²

On the Continent also we sometimes find a definite reaction at the very end of the Middle Ages. Schulte gives instances of "noble" abbeys which found themselves finally compelled to admit postulants from the upper middle class, as an alternative to extinction: for compulsory celibacy was dysgenic, and he draws out a few actual pedigrees which show its contributory effects on the decay of noble families. Here and there, again, Rome would break the barrier down for once. Jean Lyeune, in [1440], was raised by the pope to be titular Abbot of Gigny in

¹ D'Achery, *Spicilegium* (1723), I, 641; *P.L.* CXLIX, col. 635.

² Thorne, c. XII, § 3 (Twysden, col. 1815).

Franche-Comté. This was a violation of the abbey statutes; for Jean's father was only a lawyer, though eminent enough to be governor of Amiens and Arras. The papal nomination, however, justified itself; for he finally became Bishop of Téroouanne and a cardinal.¹

Wherever the concrete facts have been recorded, they entirely corroborate the generalization of a pious medieval abbot:

Note that the reason why nobles have been preferred above others in monasteries seems to have been that of defending their temporal possessions. Yet herein many abbots have been deceived, for evil and foolish nobles do more harm, by foolishly spending the abbey goods, than they do good in their defence. For their carnal friends harm the monasteries more than enemies would do. The friends of these nobles are like unto cats, who defend the cheese from rats but who, if they be given free access, eat more than the rats.²

In some extreme cases, this quasi-princely character plunged the monasteries into the princely vices of ambition and war. Here and there blood was shed between abbey and abbey for possession of disputed lands or rents; in the German Empire again, for one or other of the rivals, papal or anti-papal, who fought for the crown. Öheim tells us in his chronicle how Abbot Eggehard of Reichenau went to Rome in 1077, and was taken prisoner on the way by the Bishop of Parma.

While it went thus with our abbot in foreign lands, there came into Germany a noise and rumour that the abbot of Reichenau was dead. Thereupon King Henry [IV] gave the abbey of Reichenau to Ulrich abbot of St Gallen, in addition to his own. This wrought deadly harm and ruin to both the monasteries, and aroused bitter enmity between men, both nobles and common folk. The lord Ulrich marched upon Reichenau to take possession of that abbey and to hold it; and the marquis Berchtold of Zähringen hastened far after him, in purpose to harm him. Hence arose much robbery and burning and slaughter. The lords of both abbeys, with their vassals and tenants, were so utterly filled with hatred and enmity against each other, that they often

¹ B. Gaspard, *Hist. de Gigny* (Lons-le-Saulnier, 1843), I, 169. See also *Revue Mabillon* (1931), XXI, for cases where, in the fifteenth century, "noble" houses began to admit children of the "grasse bourgeoisie".

² Pez, *Thes.* I, ii, 635, *Johannis Abbatis Tractatus de Professione Monachorum*. This John is an uncertain figure: the MS. is not earlier than about 1320, but Pez would attribute the authorship to a certain John Gersen, abbot of Vercelli about a century earlier, to whom some have falsely attributed the *Imitatio Christi*, and whose very name may have been different.

waged and undertook fiercer strife and battles against each other than the [two rival] kings themselves, [Henry and Rudolf], so the two parties met in arms near Feltheim and fought a pitched battle; many were slain and wounded on both sides. It chanced that the most doughty count Kuno came to this field; he ran so fiercely upon the party of Rudolf that they fled in shameful flight. By reason of this hate and enmity count Wezil of Bürglen was slain by marquis Berchtold of Zähringen; and many more foul and unheard-of deeds were done, so that friends commonly and often throttled and stabbed each other; and even some who for love of God had come to conversion and had been shorn [as monks], of whatsoever Order they were, took part in the war and tumult either with counsel or with deed, and meddled therein.¹

Thus, though monasticism certainly did something to soften the division of classes during the Middle Ages, we must not exaggerate its services. Its influence was steady and ubiquitous; but it was indirect and slow. We must take account of the fact that, in appeals to the pope on what should have been purely religious and business subjects, it was common form to plead the noble birth—if only on the illegitimate side—of the applicant; this occurs on almost every page of the Calendars of Papal Petitions; and in fact there was a regular chancery formula for it. Again, it is remarkable how episcopal visitors, in forbidding this or that infringement of strict discipline, make an exception for folk of good family. Bishop Gynwell enjoined to the nuns of Heynings in 1351:

Seeing that we have heard that great disturbance of your Religion is made by secular folk who enter your cloister and choir, we charge you henceforth to suffer henceforward no secular man, unless he be your patron or some other great lord, to enter your cloister, or hold speech or other dalliance there with any sister of your house, whereby your silence or the Religious Rule might be blamed.²

This may be compared with instances which I have already given in Chapter xv.

¹ Brandi, *Geschichtsschreibung*, p. 98.

² Similar injunction to the nuns of Nun-Appleton in Dugdale-Caley, v, 654; cf. *E.H.R.* Oct. 1912, pp. 732 and 739.

CHAPTER XX

THE PATRIARCHAL ASPECT

IN these circumstances, it is natural that we should find a great cleavage, with rare exceptions, between the monk and the serf. I have dealt with this at length in Chapter XII of my *Medieval Village*, and need add little here. Charles the Great decreed that serfs should not enter monasteries except "in moderation, in order that enough might there be done, and that the farms be not left desolate". And again, even among free men (he has heard) "some take the vows not so much for devotion's sake as to escape from the army or some other royal obligation, some, again, as covetously ensnared by those who desire to get their possessions".¹ Shortly afterwards, St Benedict of Aniane repudiated for his monks the possession of bondfolk.² But, as an almost universal rule, the monks accepted serfs, and sold or exchanged serfs, as lay lords did. In two Burgundian cases, the gift of an estate to the monastery was signified by handing over publicly certain serfs who were bound to the land in question, in one case, at least, with their wives and families.³ In Germany, where monasteries were often preserves for the nobility to a greater extent than elsewhere, it is remarkable how often a postulant brought to his future brethren, as dowry, one or more bondmen or bondwomen. There are eighteen such gifts "in remedy of my soul" among the forty-one cases of endowments printed by Schulte (*Der Adel u.s.w.* pp. 359ff.). We may thus apply to the medieval abbot, to some extent at least, what Bloch says of the Frankish baron: "he would naturally have answered like that Highlander who was asked what his estate was worth: 'Five hundred men'".⁴

I have already said elsewhere that I believe the tenant's condition to have been slightly better, on the whole, under a monastic than under a lay landlord. But we must certainly not

¹ *Capit.* I, 106, 114; Mansi, xv, 489.

² Mabillon, *AA.SS.O.S.B.* saec. I, pars i, 197.

³ *Cartulaire de Molesme*, II, 13, 19, 108.

⁴ *Caractères originaux*, p. 75.

accept without reservation that old German proverb, "It is good to live under the crozier": a proverb of somewhat dubious origin which has been exploited just as journalism exploits "Merrie England", a phrase rarely used in the Middle Ages. The fact is that, whenever we find the monks freeing a serf and have evidence *pro* or *con*, we nearly always find that enfranchisement was not given, but sold. The Cistercians of Grâce-Dieu "according to such information as has come down to us, granted no manumissions [to their serfs] until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries".¹ The ecclesiastical landlord may have been a little easier than the lay: but certainly there was no essential difference between them. The prior of Canterbury (for instance) writes to the bailiff of Doccombe in 1332:

We have heard that a certain woman, Agnes of Smalregg by name, Our bondwoman, would wish to contract marriage, if it were Our pleasure, with a certain free man named Richard, son of Roger the Shearman of Morton; but it doth not seem to Us, or to our Council, that a contract of this kind could be made without prejudice to our monastery.²

Here, it is plain, the guiding principle is not the mutual affection of the peasants but their utility to the abbey. Nobody, I believe, has ever produced, from the immense mass of monastic theologians or moralists, any clear struggle for the abolition of a system which society clearly recognized as degrading to its victims. Here, again, I may add to what has been already said in my *Medieval Village* (pp. 330ff.). Bloch (p. 114; cf. pp. 92, 115) quotes from Chrétien de Troyes in the twelfth century, where a serf says: "Sire, there is naught that I would not do if thereby I might find myself a free man, and my wife and children quit [of servitude]." And his own summary runs: "The condition of the serf was incontestably a stain, a [social] blemish." Two other cases which he gives are still more significant. A chronicler writes concerning queen Blanche, the mother of St Louis, "since she had pity on the folk who were serfs, she ordained in many places that they should be freed and pay some other due. And this she did partly for the pity she had on girls of that condition, for that men would not take them to marriage, and many of

¹ Richard, p. 67.

² *Lit. Cant.* 1, 520.

them were deflowered". [Again] "in 1472, a poor servant-girl of Champagne, convicted of child-murder, excused her misconduct by pleading that she had not been able to marry after her own heart; her father had refused to unite her to 'the man she would have gladly taken' because he was a serf".¹ Ducange, again (*s.v. manumissio*), cites a charter of Louis VIII (1224) in which the king speaks repeatedly of *servitutis opprobrium*. It was an opprobrium which, in some cases, was worth removal even at the heavy expense of buying it off at the papal court. For instance:

1452. To Henry Staunton, a monk of Wynchecombe. Dispensation to him, who is a neif, the son of neifs of the above monastery, to be promoted to all, even holy orders and hold any benefice with or without cure, wont to be governed by monks of the said or other monastery of his order, even if a priory etc., and to be appointed to the abbatial dignity.²

If, again, we look to the judicial relation between the monastic lord and his tenants, which is one of the most important subjects of social history, we find much the same evidence. Paul Viollet has made a special study of the judicial registers of Parisian monasteries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.³ After alluding to the theories of St Raymund of Peñaforte, who had pleaded for a mitigation of legal cruelties, Viollet sums up: "We might have expected to find the expression of these more humane tendencies in the practice of churchmen as feudal lords; I have found no trace of this in the thirteenth-century registers of St-Maur-des-Fossés and St-Germain-des-Prés."

To the townsfolk, again, monastic dignity and conservatism brought frequent causes of friction. In France, wherever communes on abbey lands were enfranchised, they had to pay their masters heavily for liberties which were often far from complete: the abbot seldom or never shows definite sympathy with the

¹ *Recueil des historiens*, etc., xxi, 141; Bloch, p. 116 (cf. pp. 92, 114, 115).

² *C.P.L.* x, 592. The *Litterae Cantuarienses* throw light upon the business relations of monastic lord and tenant, whether bond or free: see vol. I, pp. 110, 307, 381-2, 408-10, 426, 449, 459, 499, 519-20; vol. II, pp. xxviff., 305, 307, 348, 356, 362, 376, 394, 411, 460-4. Even more valuable, perhaps, is Thorne's *Chronicle of St Augustine's, Canterbury*, now accessible in an English translation by Mr A. H. Davis.

³ *Bib. École des Chartes*, 1873, p. 317.

formation of municipalities as such. When a really great ruler, Abbot Samson of St Edmundsbury, had the good sense to commute some of the most onerous of the citizens' services for annual money-rents, even an admirer like Jocelin of Brakelond thought that he had sold the abbey's heritage. Here at Bury, as at St Albans and Dunstable and Burton, the history of abbot and town is one of continual friction and occasional warfare. J. R. Green and J. A. Froude dealt with this in separate studies; Mrs Green summed up the whole story for England in Chapter ix of her *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*. The view of a good many layfolk is expressed in a rhymed political pamphlet of [1390], *The Complaint of the Ploughman*. The author criticizes one class after another; as for the monks:

They been full grete,
And in this world much wo hath wrought.
Saint Benet, that [t]he[i]r Order brought
Ne made [t]hem never on such manere;
I trowe it came never in his thought
That they would use so great powere,
That a man should a monke lord call,
Ne serve on knees, as a king;
He is as proud as prince in pall,
In meat and drinke, and all thing...
They have lordships and bondmen;
This is a royal religion;
Saint Benet never made none of [t]hem
To have lordships of man ne toun.¹

Where we find an account of rebel villagers or townsfolk, it is nearly always recorded that they attacked monasteries, and sometimes attacked them first of all.² The Lollards undoubtedly appealed to popular feeling when they classed the abbeys with the castles as strongholds of class privilege. Wyclif strikes a very modern note when he reminds his readers that nobles often

¹ *Political Poems and Songs*, R.S. 1, 334. But we must remember that the medieval word *town* is used indiscriminately for villages and municipalities everywhere in Europe.

² I treat this also in my second volume, pp. 46-7: see especially Dean Kitchin's judgement there quoted. For Continental cases of quarrel between abbot and town see *St-Martial*, pp. lxi, 180; Gatrio, II, 4; Henry, pp. 296, 361; Bulliot, pp. 278-81; Rose Graham, *An Abbot of Vézelay*, pp. 53 ff.; *St-Trond*, II, xxxvii-xl (from 1395 onwards "la ville fut, pour ainsi dire, dans un état continuel d'insurrection" against the abbey).

preened themselves upon the perpetuity of their ancestors' foundations, instead of exercising "alms"—*i.e.* "charity" in the common sense of to-day—by their own fresh choice from generation to generation. He writes of "Antichrist" (by whom he means the pope):

He and all his cannot ground that this was ever any alms to make thus such Cain's Castles. Soothly in the Old Law was Solomon's temple a figure of the Church in the New Law; but not that the Church should be such, but free and large under the cope of heaven, and stand in virtues of man's soul; but Antichrist will close it now in cold stones that must perish.¹

A modern priest has emphasized one consideration which has perhaps not received its due weight.

The Cistercian abbeys, hidden away in country districts, offered to ardent souls only one means of doing good—self-sacrifice upon the altar of the soul, and penance. They secured to the monk only one human joy—the chaste delights of psalmody, of long prayers, of the soul's outpourings to God, and then a lofty seat in heaven. This, no doubt, was much, and this contemplative life was what our Lord called it, the better part. But who would be surprised that many souls called to this life, humanly speaking so monotonous and hard, should have gone over of their own accord to active life? Certainly, nobody; it is rather the contrary which would surprise us.²

Details such as I have given, necessary as they are for any full comprehension of actual monastic life, may sometimes lead us to over-emphasize the indubitable contrast between the Rule and the reality, and thus to lose sight of the almost equally necessary comparison between the cloister and the outside world. I have said more than once, and seize this opportunity for repeating, that there were very few times or places where Reginald Pecock's plea did not hold good. The average monk (he argues, as against the Lollards), is certainly a better member of society than the average layman. Although, in process of time, the monasteries had gone so far in conformity to "the world", yet it was often to the better sides of the world, and this breaking down of nominally strict barriers had done more than merely to weaken the ideal; it had also leavened society with good. This

¹ Wyclif, ed. Matthew, p. 478 (*de Papa*).

² Abbé Ch. Blanchot, *N.-D. d'Accey*, p. 118.

is expressed (with some kindly exaggeration, as we shall see later) by Dean Kitchin in his study of the Winchester Compotus Rolls (p. 39):

We prefer to see in the Prior a great noble, ruling over what was far better than a noble's fortress—a well-ordered, peaceful community, which on the one side kept up a perpetual protest against the rude vices of the age, and on the other side shewed to the kings, nobles and prelates who thronged our city, the pattern of an organisation for the conduct of life and business which could hardly have been found elsewhere in medieval times.

And again (p. 44):

It must never, however, be forgotten that this organisation of offices within the Convent was unique in its best days. Where in the whole world of the thirteenth century can we meet with so completely framed and active a system as that of a Benedictine House? Not, certainly, in the feudal castle, with its fierce warrior-lord, and turbulent horde of "devils, not men", as the English Chronicle calls them: not in the medieval city, with powers and privileges still uncertain and precarious, though there was here, perhaps, a nearer parallel than elsewhere; not even in the King's Courts which came and went, and had not yet developed their complete *chancellerie*, nor had learnt the importance of ministers and departments of administration. In a well ordered Monastery, with its eighteen to twenty Obedientiaries, life went on smoothly and prosperously. There only were the divisions of time fully understood and the importance of time appreciated; there only were the departments of work, the directions of industry, carefully marked off; there too the main principle of official responsibility began early to be asserted.

Dr Johnson reminds us that the average man, if he is not making money, is seldom better employed. We shall presently see how completely the ideal of manual labour for monks had died at a comparatively early date and had been only shortlived even under the great reforms, with the possible exception of the Carthusians, a tiny minority. That being so, it was often more healthy for a monk to become practically farmer or bailiff or trader than that he should idle through his life without any real religious vocation; therefore even the most worldly trader in Religion was not the worst sort. Moreover, the general trend of the evidence seems to imply that, though monks might take advantage of trade tricks, they were more straightforward on the whole than other business men: thus their intervention was good

for society. Dean Kitchin stresses the extent to which they contributed to the commercial prosperity of Winchester city, whose fair was one of the greatest in England.

The well-known house of St Swithun at Winchester, thanks to these causes, and specially to the influence of the Fair on St Giles' Hill, appears to have acquired considerable aptitude for shop-keeping. In the fourteenth century, with the exception of booths or stalls in the main street, retail trade was little practised. The monks however soon learnt how to deal in wines and stuffs, as well as in spices and grocery; they had more than one established shop in the Fair, and in this way contributed not a little to the creation of the vast commerce of our country.¹

So, again, Professor Baldwin Brown:

We see this process of growth beginning in the case of Malling Abbey, near Maidstone in Kent. Gundulf, the second Norman bishop of Rochester, founded there a nunnery, and we learn in his Life that, seeing how the place was of old time quite rural and thinly inhabited, by favour of King Henry I he turned it into a very large village suitable for merchants, who came thither for the convenience of the nuns and settled down in large numbers. When the Abbey of Holy Cross at Waltham was originally founded, the first inhabitants of the future town were sixty-six persons cured by the relic. Previously there had been nothing at the place but a poor homestead.²

Nor was it the city alone that thus reaped the benefit of monastic trading: here are the words of a scholar dealing with rural conditions in Normandy:

It is certain... that the abbeys sold their agricultural produce; and it is even probable that at an earlier period, when the peasant did not sell his, the monasteries had a monopoly of the commerce in produce which secured food for the towns... This would explain the numerous privileges which were always granted to abbeys for passing their products freely through different toll-stations.³

Even when monastic bankers took over mortgages on speculation from the Jews, as the Cistercian chronicler of Meaux in Yorkshire records of his brethren, it was probably to the general good of society that they did so.⁴

¹ Kitchin, *Compotus Rolls*, p. 6; cf. p. 60 for the monks' trade in wine.

² *Arts in Early England* (1903), I, 96.

³ Génestal, p. 181.

⁴ *Chron. Melsa*, R.S. I, 306, 315.

But there are many cases, especially in the days of early fervour and again under this or that reform, in which the monks' commercial activities need no apology whatever. My final volume will, I hope, show the services rendered thus to society by the reformed monks of the early and middle fifteenth century in Germany.¹ But the first Cistercians had sometimes done this. At Fontenay, in Burgundy, the iron-works of the twelfth century still survive intact, a magnificent building.² A Belgian abbey of Cistercians, Loos, in the middle of the thirteenth century, aimed at making itself self-supporting; the abbots built a weaving shop and a shoemakers' shop within the abbey, for the lay brethren.³ In 1290, the Cistercians of Neath had also their ironworks.⁴ La Bussière also had ironworks in the thirteenth century.⁵ In 1472 and 1480 mines and slate quarries were opened on the lands of the abbey of Münster; but in both cases by private undertakers who sought permission from the abbot and promised a royalty on their gains.⁶

We have seen the reverence with which the St Gall patrician-monks were regarded on one side, even when they were most criticized on the other; and neither of these sides must ever be ignored. Let me conclude this chapter with quotations from contemporaries which, however different in other ways, tend to explain English rebellions in favour of the monasteries in the sixteenth century, and to balance them against the anti-monastic rebellions of earlier times.

In the earlier golden days, it is touching to see how many small folk contributed with the hope of sharing in the abbey's spiritual treasure. It is true, when we find a peasant giving his little holding, or surrendering his freedom in order to become an abbey serf, there is sometimes evidence that he got his *quid pro quo* in this world, under the protection of a Church which was more able or willing than the lay lord to protect its immediate dependents from feudal violence or injustice. The peasant who

¹ See especially Busch's two chronicles, pp. 482-3, 488, 493.

² Readers who wish to realize what a Cistercian abbey looked like soon after St Bernard's death should get out at Montbard, between Paris and Dijon, and walk the 4 miles up the valley to Fontenay.

³ De Rosny, p. 40; cf. p. 44.

⁴ Birch, *Neath*, 88.

⁵ Fyot, p. 49.

⁶ Calmet, *Münster*, pp. 142-4; compare Gatrio, II, 90.

offers himself in serfdom is far commoner on the Continent than in comparatively quiet England.¹ Again, editors of chartularies sometimes point out how the unctuous religious phrases of one charter are belied by a parallel charter showing the transaction to have been not a gift but a business bargain. This, however, cannot be suspected everywhere; and many of the cases ring as true as this which Mabillon quotes in his *Annales* under the year 1080. Ingelbald, a freeman, fell sick and vowed himself to serfdom at the abbey of Vendôme if he should recover. Having regained his health, "in memory of this, he laid in gratitude upon the altar four *deniers* of his *chevage*, as such layfolk are wont; then he wound the bell-rope devoutly round his neck, and begged that a charter might be written in testimony thereof, which he marked with his own hand". Or, again, at St-Père-de-Chartres [1105] "Be it known that a certain poor woman of Mainvilliers—*paupercula mulier*—Orguen by name, came with her village priest, Ralph, into our chapter-house, and there she made St Peter heir of all her goods which she might leave at her death".² Here is another case from the same abbey, showing confident expectation of solid spiritual reward for even a comparatively small gift [1100]:

Seeing that He who searcheth the hearts is pleased not so much by the greatness of the gift as by the sincere intention of a devout mind, as Christ Himself proveth, who is the Truth, saying *whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of cold water in my name, he shall not lose his reward*, therefore I Gervase, lawful lord of Châteauneuf, for the redemption of my soul, that, with the help of the merits of the Prince of the Apostles, the door of heaven may be opened to me, a great sinner, do grant inviolably and everlastingly to the monks of St-Père that their woodmen may continually collect an abundance of dead and withered trees in my wood of Timer, the sufficiency whereof may reach to minister large and plentiful fires to the hearths of their offices, to wit of their kitchen, bakehouse, infirmary and all the rest. To their servants also, and to their beasts deputed for this work, I give safeconduct in their coming and going from all who are in my power. The monks for their part, when I or my wife shall die, have decreed to bury me with their wonted funeral rites as a son of their church. [His wife and four sons solemnly assent.] Moreover, I humbly beg and beseech all who shall succeed as heirs to my

¹ See pp. 108 ff. of my *Medieval Village*.

² *Cart. St-Père*, II, 320.

possessions that they also, in refreshment [*refrigerium*] for their souls, shall benignly assent to this grant. If, however, any one of them shall attempt to subtract from these servants of God this merciful gift of mine, let the sentence of excommunication be hurled against him, and let him undergo judgement without mercy, doomed to everlasting punishment.¹

A whole volume might be compiled from the records of touching oblations that were made at different times: often small in proportion to the owner's wealth, but suggestive of strong social sympathy between giver and receiver. Side by side with the widow's mite, we find both royal and human interest in the present made by Queen Philippa to prior Cranden of Ely: "a certain precious robe with all its garnishings, of murrey velvet powdered with golden squirrels, wherein she was robed on the day of her purification after the birth of that most excellent prince the lord Edward, her firstborn son".² But these tend to diminish, like the greater endowments, in process of time. The Cistercians of Bonport, in 1296, made a list of 105 small pieces of land or rents which they had acquired, "whether gratuitously or not gratuitously", during the eleven years of Philippe IV's reign. The total value is £59. 18s. 8d. per annum; of these, £23. 3s. 6d. are recorded as having been bought; the rest were gifts. Again in 1327 they had to make a list, for purposes of taxation, of their acquisitions during the past thirty years. There were fifty-three items, of which thirty-three came by purchase and the rest from gifts: the total yearly value was £76. 1s. 10d.³ The growing proportion of purchases as compared with gifts is remarkable.

So, again, is the colder phraseology of the charters of donation; a fact none the less significant because those were, in nearly all cases, drawn up within the monastery itself. We cannot trace this better than by confronting the century of enthusiastic benefactors with the later centuries when monastic "fraternity" had become a cut-and-dried organization.

Here, again, St-Père will give us what we want. Its charters mingle the most far-fetched metaphors with the precisest legal safeguards; in 1086 a knight gives the monks a parish church

¹ *Cart. St-Père*, II, 287.

² Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, I, 650.

³ *Cart. Bonport*, ed. Andrieux (Évreux, 1862), pp. 356, 382.

and a small farm because he feels himself and his fellow-knights to be "frail, and weighed down with the weight of iniquities". The great of this world are like elms, which grow to a vast size but bear no fruit, yet may be useful in their generation if they support the fruitful vine, which is by interpretation the pious cloisterer; thus "they make the monks' works their own, and with them they find their reward in the life to come"; and to whom can they more profitably give than "to him who openeth the gate of God's kingdom to the faithful and closeth it to the faithless, to wit, St Peter of the monastery at Chartres"?¹ Two knights, in their green unknowing youth, had oppressed some abbey tenants; they now recognize that

all who believe in Christ are called living stones, as saith the Apostle: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Wherefore, if we would that Christ should dwell in us and we in Him, we must slay our enemies—to wit, our faults—after the example of the prophet Samuel who hewed in pieces that bloated king Agag, showing thereby unto us that in our fight against carnal vices we should give no quarter, but slay all lest we ourselves fall into guilt of death; even as king Saul, who spared king Agag against the Lord's command, and therefore the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit laid hold upon him.

Consequently

we drive away from us that nefarious ambition which, in our youth, hath hitherto deceived us...and do altogether abandon those evil customs which we unjustly enforced....That dinner which, with shameless forehead, we were wont to demand on St George's day, we do altogether abandon; since he keepeth the feast ill who guardeth not himself from unlawful things...and, as aforesaid, we do now and henceforth remit all those execrable customs which we enforced....If any profane person offer to gainsay this our concession, unless he repent, let him have torment without end in hell with the traitor Judas and with those who crucified our Lord Jesus. This deed is given publicly in the town of Dreux [A.D. 1086]; it is drawn up by Paul, monk and sacristan [of St-Père].²

These twelfth-century donors "make the monks' works their own, and with them they find their reward in the life to come". This, in the later Middle Ages, became as definitely formalized and commercialized as the Indulgence system; *Piers Plowman*

¹ *Cart. St-Père*, I, 249.

² *Ibid.* p. 247. The whole deed should be read.

and *The Canterbury Tales* satirize both (it may almost be said) in the same breath.¹ It is refreshing to look back from this to monastic "fraternities" in their earlier stages. Here is the birth of one in Italy, from a contemporary charter, printed by abbot Tosti in his *History of Monte Cassino* (I, 243):

In the name of the Lord God our Saviour Jesus Christ. In the year [994]...the whole people dwelling in Terracina went forth to the [abbey] Church [of Monte Cassino]...Then the Spirit came upon us all; for the Spirit bloweth whither he listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof. And the lord John, Catholic Bishop, arose with his clergy and came to Guindane and said unto the people: "Hearken, my blessed children" (and forthwith all held their peace) "let us all remember to do good; for those who do good in this world shall receive an hundredfold in that life everlasting; for when all men come to the Day of Doom, then shall they give account of their deeds. They who have done good shall go into eternal life, if we so do as to earn admission to that life. Let us all remember this monastery, which is in honour of God and the holy and most blessed confessor Benedict, that he may deign to intercede for us, and may be our protector in the presence of our Lord at the Day of Doom; and let us offer to this said monastery, every year, from those whole six fishing grounds of the city of Terracina, six thousand eels, one thousand from each fishery." Then the people hearing this, both great and small, cried with a loud voice and said: "all we are strongly inclined thereunto, and we have great desire for this thing." And the men of the said city bare record of this, and they went up to Monte Cassino for prayer, and forthwith all spake unto the venerable abbot, the lord Manso, by the mouth of all men of the said city, that on the second Sunday thereafter he should send word to his monks to go to the said city of Terracina and inscribe all folk in their fraternity, both great and small, men and women, and for the said folk to pledge themselves by a charter to give yearly 6000 eels... And this, for that we have had a great calamity among us,² and in order that we may have merit to all eternity with the aforesaid monastery of the holy and most blessed confessor. And if any man seek to do violence to this charter concerning these eels, may the said St Benedict render him his deserts here and to all eternity; and may he give him over to the hands of his enemies; and, when he departeth this life, let the earth not receive him. And we have done this under no man's compulsion or contradiction or violence, but by our own spontaneous

¹ PP. B, VII, 191; CT. D, 1944.

² The evidence, as Tosti says, suggests either some pestilence or a cruel invasion.

will, for the love of God Almighty and the redemption of our soul and the pardon of our sins, and for your most holy prayers, which we see to be constantly made for the salvation of all Christians and for our souls. And, whosoever will gainsay this offering, let him be bound with the chain of anathema, and be condemned at God's everlasting Judgement-seat, and find his portion with the traitor Judas, and go down with him to the whirlpool of the gulf of hell, and find perdition with the unrighteous. Whosoever, on the other hand, shall keep this pact with pious care, may he earn from our Lord, the Just Judge, the grace of benediction and of heavenly reward.

Such popular religious confraternities were apt to degenerate, as the modern bazaar sometimes does, into meetings which were treated mainly as amusements; and, in the Middle Ages, amusement implied copious libations. Thus we find St Stephen of Grammont in Chapter 20 of his Rule commanding his brethren, "Let the populace on no account hold in your monasteries those banquetings which they call confraternities." The monks, naturally and rightly, took the management of the confraternity system into their own hands. Thus the Cistercian General Chapter, in 1212, forbade the granting of privileges of fraternity for money.¹ But, in process of time, it became an organization of registered contributions. The *Customal* of Murbach (Augustinians, twelfth century) has a chapter (125) dealing with *confratres*; the formula of reception is expressly stated to be "both for rich and for poor".² But other monastic records seem to take for granted a money contribution; and I do not know of anyone who has produced evidence for gratuitous admissions.³ Here are two typical examples from England and France.

At St Albans, in [1390]:

our venerable Father, the lord Thomas [de la Mare], by God's grace abbot of this monastery, with the assent of our whole Chapter, decreed that the spiritual benefits of this house should be imparted to all and several who should contribute any votive offering to us and our abbey for themselves or their friends, living or dead, from the goods which God had given them, granting unto them full fraternity of this monastery, that they may share fully with ourselves in Masses,

¹ Molinier, *Obituaires*, p. 130.

² Martène, *Antiq. Mon. Rit.* III, 320.

³ E.g. Gasquet, *Monastic Life*, p. 126, "to benefactors or people of distinction".

Matins, Hours, alms, fasts, vigils, processions, disciplines, prayers, both public and private, and all other good works which are done in this abbey, or in our cells thereunto appertaining. Wherefore, in order to show to those who would fain learn their part in this most excellent benefit, we have thought fit to write upon this page the Masses which we cause customarily to be celebrated daily, above and beyond those which are celebrated all the year through by a hundred monks and more.¹

For three Masses are sung every day by note: to wit, Morrowmass, Lady-Mass, and High Mass. Three more, again, are regularly said without note: one for the Church, which is always a Mass of the BVM, another for benefactors in especial, which is always of St Alban, and the third for the dead. In all these benefits we wish the benefactors of this monastery to share; and also in the pardons and indulgences granted to this abbey by Popes, Archbishops and Bishops: to wit, of 9 years and 175 days, and in all the countless secret benefits which are wrought by the brethren with great devotion and utmost contrition of heart, out of special personal devotion, to the praise of God and His most holy Mother and our most blessed patron Alban, protomartyr of England, and Amphibalus, and those whose revered relics are contained in our church.

We decree also that the names of all our Benefactors be written in the present Register, and laid upon the high altar, and brought to the celebrant's memory in the prayer here following:

"We beseech thee, o Lord, by the intercessions of Thy Saints, both to protect us and to extend Thy mercy everywhere over thy servants, both men and women, whom we here commemorate or whose alms we have received, or who are joined unto us by friendship; that they may be defended from all assaults and saved by Thy help; also, that Thou vouchsafe to add unto the company of Thine elect the souls of all Thy servants, both men and women, faithful and orthodox Catholics, whom we here commemorate and whose bodies rest in this abbey or in any graveyard of faithful folk, or whose names are seen here written upon Thine altar. Be propitious, O Lord, to our supplications, and vouchsafe to accept these oblations which we bring to be consecrated unto Thy name for the health of Thy servants, both men and women, and for the souls of all faithful orthodox Catholics whom we commemorate and whose names are seen here written upon Thine altar; in order that the oblation of this present sacrifice may make by Thy mercy for the refreshing of their souls. We beseech Thee, O Lord, may we be purified by the reception of the holy Sacrament and by the glorious prayers of Thy Saints, and

¹ This, no doubt, includes the cells also. At St Albans itself, there were only 60 monks in 1396 [p. xxii], among whom there would scarcely be more than 50 priests.

grant remission of all their sins unto the souls of Thy servants, both men and women, whom we here commemorate, through our Lord Jesus Christ."¹

Again, from Molesme in 1470:

To all who shall see these presents, Brother Jacques [de Jussey], by God's grace the humble abbot of Molesme, of the Order of St Benedict, in the diocese of Langres, and all the congregation of that abbey, wish eternal salvation in God and continual abundance of good works. We believe that we serve God in that we stir and excite all men's minds to works of charity and piety whereby men's souls are saved. Since therefore the humble supplication of our brother the prior of our dependent house of Notre-Dame de Méry, in the diocese of Troyes, hath been set before us, to the effect that many devout folk of either sex are wont to assemble for devotion's sake at the priory aforesaid, on many solemn feasts and on other fixed days of the year, in honour and praise of our Saviour Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin Mary aforesaid, and are forming a confraternity or *confrérie*; seeing moreover that the said priory and its church have, by ravage of war and other evils of these days, been brought almost to utter ruin in their sculptures and buildings and revenues, so that divine worship and other works of piety to the honour of God and His saints can be less duly practised than aforetime; therefore we, yearning and panting with all our heart for their rebuilding and restoration and for the increase of all fruits of religion—we, I say, the aforesaid abbey and convent, ratifying and approving this confraternity or *confrérie*, and considering that, as St Paul saith, he who soweth worldly things should reap also spiritual things,² and willing, so far as in us lieth, to help God in changing those worldly things into spiritual, and to win the souls of such devout folk for God, and to give what we can in return—to all and singular, therefore, of this confraternity, and to other our benefactors of either sex, whether alive or dead, and to all men or women who have given or shall give pious alms and gracious subsidies of charity from the substance which God hath granted unto them, and who have or shall stretch out helping hands to the building and restoration of the said church and priory of Notre-Dame, we do hereby give a share in all and several those spiritual good things which, with God's help, are and shall be done henceforth in our said monastery and priory, and in the other houses of our congregation, associating these aforesaid benefactors with all good things that are and shall be done henceforth in all and singular the monasteries of the whole Cluniac

¹ *Trokelowe*, R.S. p. 428.

² A somewhat free use of I Cor. ix, 11.



THE BENEFACTORS OF CROWLAND

Order, both abbeys and priories; in the abbey of Marmoutier; in [25 great abbeys] of St Benedict; and in the monasteries of the whole Cistercian Order, from the greatest even unto the least, wheresoever they be throughout the whole of Christendom; to wit, in their Masses, their mattins, all their hours and psalmodes and vigils and fastings and almsgivings and self-chastisements and all spiritual goods whatsoever, whereof we make them partners and sharers with us, both in life and in death; so that, through these and other good works which they have done and shall do, by God's help, they may earn His grace in this present world, and in the next world everlasting glory. Yet we strictly command the prior of this our said priory, in virtue of holy obedience, that he convert no goods given to his said church by reason of these our letters, to any other use than to the aforesaid reparations and to the well-being of the said priory. Given in our chapter of Molesme, solemnly assembled, as is our custom, by the sound of the bell, on the last day of April in the year 1172, from our Lord's birth.

At Bury, in 1220, letters of irate generosity were granted to fourteen persons on the same day. Among them was the earl of Buckingham, wherefore he made a feast for the whole community, both for the hall and for the refectory, and he furnished fish and bread and ale and wine in abundance at his own expense, in addition to two precious copes with all their appurtenances.² This system itself, however, was waning in popularity when the sixteenth century came in.³

The accompanying plate, which has already been utilized by Dr F. Page in her *Estates of Crowland Abbey*, may help us here by way of illustration and contrast. To the monks, in their feudal mood, it was the story of noble benefactors who jostled with each other to force gifts upon a condescendingly receptive saint. But in their business moments they realized clearly enough the necessity for worldly struggles and worldly guarantees; and, in cold blood, they would have had little to say against the verdict of Honorius of Autun (or Augsburg? [1130]), except that, after the fashion of moralists in his and their age, he was a severe critic. When Honorius, in his *Elucidarium*, comes to speak "of various conditions of layfolk", his pupil asks "What hope [of salvation] have merchants?" To which the master answers:

¹ *Cart. Molesme*, II, 555.

² *Archaeologia*, xv, 70 n.

³ *Hist. MS. Com. Report*, ix, app. i, p. 119 b.



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Order, both abbeys and priories; in the abbey of Marmoutier; in [25 great abbeys] of St Benedict; and in the monasteries of the whole Cistercian Order, from the greatest even unto the least, wheresoever they be throughout the whole of Christendom; to wit, in their Masses, their mattins, all their hours and psalmodes and vigils and fastings and almsgivings and self-chastisements and all spiritual goods whatsoever, whereof we make them partners and sharers with us, both in life and in death; so that, through these and other good works which they have done and shall do, by God's help, they may earn His grace in this present world, and in the next world everlasting glory. Yet we strictly command the prior of this our said priory, in virtue of holy obedience, that he convert no goods, given to his said church by reason of these our letters, to any other use than to the aforesaid reparations and to the well-being of the said priory. Given in our chapter of Molesme, solemnly assembled, as is our custom, by the sound of the bell, on the last day of April in the year 1470 from our Lord's birth.¹

At Bury, in 1440, letters of fraternity were granted to fourteen persons on the same day. Among them was the earl of Buckingham: "wherefore he made a feast for the whole community, both for the hall and for the refectory; and he furnished fish and bread and ale and wine in abundance at his own expense, in addition to two precious copes with all their appurtenances".² This system itself, however, was waning in popularity when the sixteenth century came in.³

The accompanying plate, which has already been utilized by Dr F. Page in her *Estates of Crowland Abbey*, may help us here by way of illustration and contrast. To the monks, in their ideal mood, it was the story of noble benefactors who jostled with each other to force gifts upon a condescendingly receptive Saint. But in their business moments they realized clearly enough the necessity for worldly struggles and worldly guarantees; and, in cold blood, they would have had little to say against the verdict of Honorius of Autun (or Augsburg? [1130]), except that, after the fashion of moralists in his and their age, he was a severe critic. When Honorius, in his *Elucidarium*, comes to speak "of various conditions of layfolk", his pupil asks "What hope [of salvation] have merchants?" To which the master answers:

¹ *Cart. Molesme*, II, 555.

² *Archaeologia*, xv, 70 n.

³ Hist. MS. Com. Report, ix, app. i, p. 119 b.

“Small; for wellnigh all that they possess is gotten with fraud and perjury and [filthy] lucre.” *P.* “But do they not visit holy places, gladly sacrifice to God, and give liberal alms?” *M.* “All those things they do, in order that God may increase their possessions and guard what they have already; and thus they have their reward: for of them it is written that they trust in the multitude of their riches, [but] ‘They are laid in hell like sheep; death shall feed upon them.’” If we dismiss purely sentimental idealism, and judge the monks as we judge other people, by the standard of average humanity, then by that standard we must justify them. They might have pleaded: “In the world as it is, how else can we live ourselves, and how else make any public use at all of the funds entrusted to us?” And we must answer that, in those particular conditions, amid that particular society, human nature suggests those actual results. With ordinary humanity, and even the best of ordinary humanity, monasticism need fear no comparison. It is only when exceptional and exaggerated claims are made—as they too often are—that we must insist on controlling these by the monks’ own records and the verdict of their contemporaries.

CHAPTER XXI

PRIVATE PROPERTY

FROM monastic gettings we must now pass to monastic spendings; and in this second part, as in the first, we must study the practice quite as closely as the theory. By all means let us first watch the monk under broad lights and in his own chosen self-conscious attitude; but here, almost more than in any other field of social history, we must exploit also that mass of illustrative documents, with their multitudinous cross-lights, which reveal him too deeply intent upon his own practical problems to think, for the moment, of present or future spectators. Our own generation is increasingly, and justly, critical of facile generalizations; men see with greater clearness that it is as misleading to exalt monasticism in the words of a few contemporary panegyrics or wistful pictures of the past, as it would be to condemn the institution on the strength of a corresponding handful of severe strictures. The evidence which I have collected in my second volume, and especially in Chapters xxvi-xxviii and Appendices 34-36, should suffice to show that contemporaries constantly felt the gulf between monastic theory and practice to be immense. I say this the more confidently here because even those critics who were least satisfied with that catena have not themselves offered real rebutting evidence; they have, indeed, sometimes permitted themselves to imply that the witnesses have been arbitrarily chosen, but without offering any such serious proof as an author has a right to demand in support of that injurious suspicion.¹

Moreover, it is not wholly to the discredit of our distant forefathers that their practice should have been so far below the level of their theory: for, conversely, we must give them credit for aiming at ideals so far above the facts. The best minds in those ages were quite as conscious of the gulf as we can be; and it is evident that some of them sought relief from their sordid surroundings in describing golden dreams which they knew had never been and never would be realized. Such, for instance, is

¹ See Appendix.

that well-known *Consuetudinary* of the abbey of Abingdon, which has sometimes been quoted not only in legitimate proof of what monks should ideally be, but also of what they ordinarily were in deed. The thirteenth-century compiler of that charming book, before setting out the detailed duties of each conventual officer, sketches the *beau-idéal* of the office. Here, for instance, is his description of the almoner, in modern summary:

"Every almoner must have his heart aglow with charity", says one writer, "His pity should know no bounds, and he should possess the love of others in a most marked degree; he must show himself as the helper of orphans, the father of the needy, and as one who is ever ready to cheer the lot of the poor, and help them to bear their hard life."...He should submit without manifesting any sign of impatience to the loud-voiced importunity of beggars, and must on no account abuse or upbraid them, "remembering always that they are made to the image of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ".¹

This is admirable, but we may compare it with the description of the ideal servant by the contemporary lawyer who composed the book called *Fleta*. He writes:

Let the lord get himself a circumspect and faithful seneschal, a man of prudence, discretion, and grace, humble and chaste, peaceful and modest, well skilled in the laws and in the customs of his province and in the duties of a seneschal, and anxious to defend his lord's rights in all things.

He must preside in the manor-court with the harmlessness of the dove and the wisdom of the serpent. He must survey his lord's estates, familiarize himself with agriculture in theory and in practice, and act as a skilled accountant. "Moreover, he must know about the wardships and marriages; when they came into his lord's hands and how much they are worth a year." His eye (continues the author) must be open night and day to mark the least transgression on the part of the workmen, or the least accident to the live stock. Every evening he must balance the day's accounts, and check tallies with the purveyor, marshal, cook, dispenser, larderer and other officials. He counts the loaves, measures the malt, and stands by to direct the division of messes for dinner and supper. Of the dairymaid, again, *Fleta* writes:

¹ Gasquet, *Monastic Life*, p. 90.

She should be chaste and honest, faithful and laborious in her dairy, wise and neat-handed; not lavish, but of a saving temper; for she shall suffer neither man nor woman to come to her dairy and bear aught away which might disparage that for which she must make account.... Moreover, it is her duty to winnow and make packages, to cover the fire, and to do such like small works whereunto her leisure may extend.¹

But we know, from abundant evidence, that medieval servants were like ourselves, good, bad and indifferent; and, with regard to Abingdon, most scholars will agree with Mr Kirk: "That treatise [the Consuetudinary] may be regarded as a declaration of what they ought to have done in theory, while the accounts show what they really did in practice."² And we cannot entirely ignore the fact that the author of *Piers Plowman*, when he prophesied coming destruction upon the English monasteries in punishment for neglect of their Rule, chose precisely Abingdon for his capital instance. There was something, no doubt, in the alliteration; but this is neglected in the C-text, while the B-text runs:

And then shall the abbot of Abingdon, and all his issue for ever
Have a knock of a king, and incurable the wound.³

Therefore, in our detailed survey of monastic daily life, it will be well to begin on the sure ground of the account-rolls.

Not, of course, that we should for a moment be justified in dismissing the ideal from our minds. Every true ideal is a great reality, and we neglect it at our peril. The remains of our monasteries are not only exquisite specimens of art. Even if they were as ungraceful as they are beautiful, still they were built as the visible testimonial to an ideal in the midst of a world far more dominated by materialism than is generally realized; therefore, no man who feels that the Unseen is greater than the Seen can afford to despise even the most shapeless ruins of them. Within any one of those greater houses, at one time or another, lived some men—if only a minority like Abraham and Lot—who were as truly absorbed in the contemplation of God as we are in our own struggles and failures, our work and our play, our loves

¹ *Fleta*, ed. Selden, pp. 159, 172.

² *Abingdon Account Rolls*, ed. E. G. Kirk, introd. p. xi.

³ B, x, 326. It is significant that, in the line above, he speaks of the Benedictines as deserving this fate by their "evil spendings".

and our hates. These men, like bees, added cell to cell, and brought honey from every flower, until at last they gave us that book *Of the Imitation of Christ*, which, in its strength and its limitations, is as truly the quintessence from centuries of monastic contemplation as the Church prayers are the quintessence from centuries of public worship. It would be folly to deny that a chosen few actually lived up to this ideal, or to write the history of civilization without giving those men the prominence they deserve. Yet, on the other hand, it is no less perverse to note only these few in their highest aims, or the profession of those high aims by a multitude of others, while blinding ourselves to all further enquiry. No institution can claim exemption from Christ's supreme test: *By their fruits ye shall know them*. Here, as elsewhere, we must look behind professions to the man's deeds; for the written or spoken word is often pitched higher in proportion to the inward consciousness of failure, not through hypocrisy, but with a real hope of atonement, and of gradual conformity with higher aspirations. We must therefore neglect no evidence which may enable us to test the monastic ideal; and one of the clearest tests is supplied, within certain limits, by the multitude of surviving account-rolls.¹

Mr Snape has justly warned us against attempting excessive simplification in the evidential use of these rolls.² Even where they seem exhaustive, it is never safe to take this for granted, and we must always allow for the possibility of some unrecorded receipt or expenditure. Yet, when the fullest allowance has been made for these uncertainties, the certainties which they yield us are of the utmost value, especially in corroborating or checking other sources of evidence. This, I hope, will come out more and more clearly in the course of my succeeding chapters.

Those who have written on the last days of monastic life in England have laid too much emphasis, from one side or the other, upon the so-called Black Book. It may be that no such book ever existed; it is certain that Henry VIII's visitors were not people on whose bare word we can rely; and therefore it is wise to neglect their evidence as much as possible. The preamble

¹ See Appendix.

² *English Monastic Finances*, pp. 44-5, 51, 63-5. This book may be compared with the corresponding chapters in Professor Eileen Power's *Medieval English Numeraries*, and with Dr Rose Graham's article on Gilbertine economics in *Roy. Hist. Soc. Trans.* (1904), pp. 131 ff.

to the Act of Dissolution again (1536) is not a document which we can take simply at its face value. But it does show clearly one thing which historians have not taken sufficiently into account; it lays almost as great stress on economic mismanagement in the smaller houses as it does upon moral and religious decay. These monks, it asserts, "spoil, destroy, consume, and utterly waste, as well their Churches, Monasteries, Priories, principal Houses, Farms, Granges, Lands, Tenements, and Hereditaments, as the Ornaments of their Churches, and their Goods and Chatells". Moreover (it pursues) the official visitors of the last 200 years have been able to work no real amendment; on the contrary, things are drifting rather to the worse than to the better side.¹ It will be the aim of this present chapter and the rest of the volume to examine how far these accusations were justified. We must bear steadily in mind, all through, the practical certainty that they are couched in exaggerated language; we must remember also that the monasteries were planted in the midst of a society where business methods and business safeguards were comparatively rudimentary.² We must compare the monks not with modern charity-trustees, but with men like the Pastons and Celys and Stonors and those Italian merchants whom we know through their letters and their business accounts.³

¹ See full text in Appendix.

² For Italy, see Guido Biagi, *Men and Manners of Old Florence*. For England, H. S. Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, and Eileen Power, *Medieval People*, chapter v.

³ See *The Cely Papers* (Royal Hist. Soc. 1900), xi. "But trade, apart from Staples, was in the nature of things not free in the Middle Ages. The insecurity of roads, even in peace time, the greater insecurity of the seas, illustrated continually in these Letters, the frequency of wars, the existence of local privileges, tolls and restrictions, rendered any unprotected trade very irregular and uncertain. Fraudulent trading and dealing, the recovery of debts, the settlement of any personal disputes between merchants, were more easily dealt with if merchants were incorporated, and did their business only in certain places. Specially, their person and goods were far more easily defended. Africa and the South Seas afford abundant illustrations of the mischief done by irresponsible private traders in those days. Though England and Flanders in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were not quite on a level with the Niger territory and New Guinea, yet they were probably rather nearer to the former in social conditions than they were to the England and Belgium of to-day. Restrictions of individual liberty are the natural penalty of an imperfect civilisation, and the imperfectly civilised, in the fourteenth or any other century, usually admit it. It does not appear that the establishment of the Staple was contrary to the general wishes of the age."

The first point of monastic housekeeping which claims our attention is that of *Proprietas*—private property. St Benedict's Rule runs (Chapter xxxiii):

Especially let this vice be uprooted and cut off from the monastery, that none may presume to give or take anything without the abbot's command [*jussione*], nor to possess anything of his own; neither a book nor writing-tablets nor pen, since the brethren cannot lawfully possess even their own bodies nor their wills in their own power. Rather should they hope for all things needful from the Father of the Monastery; and let them be allowed to have nothing that the abbot has not either given or permitted. And let all things be common to all, as it is written [Acts iv, 32] nor let any say or presume that anything is his own. If, however, any be found to delight in this most wicked vice, let him be admonished once and again, and, if he amend not, subjected to correction.

The unusual emphasis of this chapter must strike us at once, and the explicit argument with which St Benedict supports his decision: monks must look to their abbot for every necessary of life: anything like economic independence spells ruin to the military discipline of the Rule.¹ St Benedict knew this not only from long personal experience, but from the teaching of earlier legislators like Pachomius; and later saints were at one with him. "We have sold ourselves", says St John Climacus; and this 33rd chapter of the Rule is taken by all medieval commentators and monastic disciplinarians with all the seriousness which St Benedict requires.²

Disciplinarians assure us that the *Tria Substantialia* of the monastic profession were inextricably intertwined: Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. One of the earliest of these treatises, the ninth-century *Regula Magistri*, strikes that keynote which echoes down from generation to generation: *proprietas* is the sin of Ananias (or, by variation, of Judas, or of Gehazi).³

¹ *Omnes magistrum sequantur Regulam* (ch. iiii): *Lex sub qua militare vis* (ch. lviii); cf. *militaturus*, *arma* in the Prologue.

² In all this section I am deeply indebted, as all modern writers must be, to Dom Martène's *Commentarius in Reg. S. Benedicti*. My references are to the original edition (Paris, 1690).

³ Holsten, *Codex Regularum*, I, 431, § lxxxi. Cardinal Gasquet, not recognizing this stock allusion, prints several times the nonsensical *traditoris inde* for *traditoris Iude*—i.e. "of Judas" (*Collect. Anglo-Prem.* II, 23, etc.).

On the one hand, they indicate the abbot's duty of caring that no monk shall lack his necessities; on the other, they remind us that this establishes no claim for superfluities; on the contrary, the words seem designed to exclude this (p. 428). As to *meum* and *tuum*, Cassian, after describing Pachomius's model monastery, adds:

Moreover, in other monasteries, wherein some things are indulged with a certain remissness, we find this rule most strictly kept to such a point that no man dares even to speak of anything as his own, and it is a great offence when he lets fall the words *my book, my tablets, my pen, my tunic, my hosen* [or *boots*], and he must needs amend this by due penance if perchance in thoughtlessness or ignorance the word has escaped his lips.¹

And Udalric the Cluniac commentator: "The monk calls all things *ours* except his father and mother; of these alone can he lawfully say *mine*" (p. 430). The abbot himself is not exempted in one of the early commentaries; "if he persist in the vice [of *proprietas*], let him be reported to the bishop; and if, when rebuked by him, he amend not, let him be deposed" (pp. 424, 430).

Yet no clause of the Rule was more frequently broken, in spite of St Benedict's emphasis; or, shall we say, that emphasis itself suggests unusual temptation to violate. Cassian tells us how a man may have given up masses of money and rich estates when he took the vows; "yet we have seen him fall into a passion for the sake of a stool or a writing-stylus or a needle or a pen" (p. 422). Therefore St Benedict insists upon strict practical measures: "The monks' beds must be often searched by the abbot, for the sake of private possessions, lest such be found. If in any man's bed anything be found which he has not received from the abbot, let him be subjected to the severest discipline."²

¹ The Augustinian Rule, though here, as elsewhere, it is less strict and emphatic and detailed than the Benedictine, is still sufficiently clear (c. 2): "Let none say that anything is his own, but let all things be in common among you." The visitor who argued the matter at the Council of Constance made no distinction on this point between the two Rules (V. d. Hardt, III, 134).

² Ch. LV *ad fin.* Yet a modern apologist, in evident ignorance of this chapter, treats it as unfairly meddlesome when he finds medieval visitors earnest enough to support this procedure! The papal legate Cusanus [1440] warned monastic visitors of their duty of bed-searching (Tritheim, *Op. Pia*, 1025).

On this Hildemar, in [820], comments:

When the monks were all assembled in morning chapter, the abbot was wont to warn the brethren of this bed-scrutiny; and then, while the rest remained in the chapterhouse, he would send four or five brethren of good conversation into the dormitory, to search the beds one by one. If private possessions were found anywhere, these brethren came back to the chapterhouse and laid it at the feet of him in whose bed it had been found; then the abbot bade him render account thereof and punished him in proportion to the quality of his transgression (p. 722).

If the object were of less value than four pence, he was adjudged only to "minor culpa"; *i.e.* to the same three days' disgrace at meals and elsewhere as if (for instance) he had come late to choir or laughed and talked there, or sworn, or carelessly misused a book, or sent or received letters without permission, or had jested and laughed heartily—*qui satis riserit* (pp. 363-4). If the amount were more serious, he was "in majori culpa", cut off from the brethren in choir and at table, fed on the bread of affliction and the water of affliction. St Gregory the Great, finding a hoard in the bed of a dead monk, caused this *proprietary* to be buried in the dunghill; and that incident became as regular a reference among disciplinarians as St Bernard's epigram, "The monk who possesseth a halfpenny is not worth a halfpenny."¹

Yet, just as St Benedict's emphasis seems to predict future difficulties, so we may read the same lesson from the decrees of Popes and Councils and General Chapters (pp. 431ff.). In Gratian's *Decretum* this abdication of private property is explicitly founded on apostolic practice; and the decision is that, if a monk be raised to a bishopric, he can have nothing of his own: if money be bequeathed to him "it is the property of the Church".² Alexander III dealt with this weighty question at the Third General Council of the Lateran, and Innocent III at the Fourth. His decision, which passed into Canon Law, was uncompromising: the proprietary monk must be expelled from the

¹ Monachus qui habet obolum non valet obolum. See V. d. Hardt, III, 132, 159; Jordanus de Quedlinborch, *Serm.* 203 (ed. Paris, 1521), fol. 345 b; Hugh of St-Cher, I, 2904; Caes. Heist. *Hom.* II, 40; [Vincent of Beauvais], *Speculum Morale*, 1338.

² Pars II, c. xii, q. 1, c. 8; pars III, dist. v, c. 4 n.

monastery; if he be found proprietary in death, he must be buried in Gregorian fashion, under the dunghill "in token of perdition". Moreover, "let not the abbot suppose that he may dispense with a monk in this matter of possessing property: for the abdication of property, like as the keeping of chastity, is so annexed to the monastic Rule that not even the Supreme Pontiff can grant an indulgent licence".¹ Gregory IX was equally emphatic in the code which he promulgated for the whole Benedictine Order: and again in a similar code for the Cluniacs. Nicholas IV slightly softened the penalty: the proprietary monk must be degraded for a year to the lowest place in his convent, and eat all that time seated on the ground. Benedict XII, the last medieval pope who fought hard for monastic reform, declared "proprietarys" incapable of holding any office or benefice.

The Second Council of Auxerre decreed banishment; that of London under Lanfranc (1075) excommunication and burial without rites in unconsecrated ground; another at London (1200) repeated this. At the Council of Trent, the penalty decreed was two years' loss of office and vote, and "punishment according to the constitutions of his Order".

Those constitutions are rehearsed by Martène, pp. 432 ff. The Cistercian constitution ran:

Any monk or lay-brother caught in theft or *proprietas* shall be last of the whole convent for a year at least, and as much longer as the abbot may think good: and every Friday in that year he shall be fed on bread and water, and for forty days upon the coarser bread. The lay-brother shall eat upon the earth, and sit in cloister for those forty days, and labour in silence at the work imposed upon him; nor let him speak except with the abbot, or with him who ordereth the discipline of the convent, and with the master of the lay-brethren, and concerning [sacramental] confession. Also let him be present at all the hours of Church service; and, for that whole year, let him be beaten at every chapter at which he is present; and let the monk be beaten forty days in the monks' chapter. Also, if the theft exceed the value of twenty *sols*, whether monk or lay-brother, let him be stripped of his frock and cast out at the gate. If a lay-brother is to be received back, let him not be received except as a labourer, eating the coarser bread for a whole year and wearing no linen; if then he steal again, or suffer imprisonment, let him be utterly cast forth from

¹ *Decret. Greg.* lib. III, tit. xxv, c. 6.

the Order. If a monk be received again, let him first perform the penance for "culpa major", and, suffering in addition the penalty already noted for a monk, let him abstain a whole year from service at the altar, even though his theft or *proprietas* be committed in a small or slight matter. Yet the abbot shall have discretion to temper this penance if it be for a very small thing.

Moreover, to guard against secret breach of the Rule, all "proprietaries" were to be solemnly excommunicated yearly in chapter, "with stole and lighted candle and pastoral staff, if the abbot be present, by authority of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Ghost, and of the blessed Mary and all the saints".

In 1227 there was evidently doubt as to the literal infliction of the severest penalties; for a case came before the General Chapter, which decreed:

As for that lay-brother who, dying suddenly, was found to possess five *deniers* [rather less than the daily wage of a skilled artisan], and had not confessed—nay, had come to Holy Communion at the sacred feast of the Nativity without confessing—let him remain as he is, buried without the graveyard.

Yet in 1215, as we have seen, Innocent III had done all a pope could do to decide that case without appeal. Martène goes on to show that four other Benedictine or quasi-Benedictine Congregations passed similar decrees. The Carthusians, however, suggest on attentive observation some of the doubts which we have already inferred from the Cistercians. Their *Ancient Statutes* reckon as *proprietas* the retention of any sum beyond 12 *deniers*; their *New Statutes* alter this to thrice that sum (*i.e.* 3 *sols*), though the value of money would not have trebled in that time.

The fact is that the stricter early regulations were becoming more and more evidently impossible. It was very embarrassing that Innocent III, in Ecumenical Council, should have declared the absence of property and the law of chastity so inseparably annexed to the Rule that not even a pope can grant dispensation. Nobody could openly dispute so solemn a pronouncement; but it was not long before theologians and canonists attempted to outflank it. The pope could not, indeed, absolve a monk from his vow of poverty, but might he not absolve him from monk-

hood at one stroke, so that this person, henceforward a non-monk, was no longer bound by that particular rule? St Thomas Aquinas decides against this: "the pope cannot so make it that he who has taken the Religious vow should not be a Religious, albeit certain lawyers ignorantly assert to the contrary."¹ But in fact popes did allow, for political purposes, the marriage of princes or princesses who had taken the vows; contemporaries believed this in the case of Frederick II's mother; and, later, it was done without any disguise whatever: "who knows not the dispensation to Casimir, the vowed monk of Cluny, who was taken from the cloister to become king of Poland?"² Therefore that possibility which St Thomas seems so definitely to deny must needs be admitted, if only tacitly. So, again, with the proprietary monk; it might be firmly maintained that the pope could not grant a dispensation here, and yet a side-door might be opened by artificial definitions of *proprietas*.

Thus the real fight was waged round that definition: at what point did *proprietas* begin? St Pachomius [340] was as strict as we might expect from so formidable an athlete of God: "Let him not lay up anything in his cell, not even apples, without his abbot's command" (p. 424). But, when once the matter had come formally into the domain of Canon Law, as it did with the reception of Innocent III's decree, then it became necessary to work from less uncompromising definitions. The English General Chapter Statutes of 1219-25, while classing "proprietary" with conspirators and thieves, defines them as "those who, without knowledge of their abbot (or of their prior if there be no abbot) possess anything to themselves which the abbot has not given or permitted".³ Again, the Chapter of 1343 decreed: "We define as *proprietary* the monk who possesses for himself anything of the goods of the monastery without the knowledge of his superior; anything which his superior has not

¹ *Sum. Theol.* 2 a, 2 ae, quaest. lxxxviii, art. 11 *conclusio*. Cf. CLXXXVI, art. 8, *ad tert.*

² Louys, p. 138, who uses this example to justify all kinds of remarkable papal dispensations. The confusions and uncertainties surrounding this subject may be measured by Fagnanus's hesitating judgements as summarized in Migne's *Encyclopédie du Droit Canon*, II, 1224 (*Dispense des Vœux*).

³ Pantin, I, 18. The General Chapter of 1277 practically repeated this (*ibid.* p. 77).

given him or has not permitted him to possess.”¹ We may compare this with St Antonino in his *Summa* (pars III).

Yet it was precisely with the superior, the abbot, that the difficulty began. Apart from the vexed question of his dispensing power, to which we shall come in due course, the abbot himself was liable to become the most definite *proprietaryus* of the whole convent. Father Thomassin had already told the story with his usual command of details;² but it has been retold lately in far fuller form by a French professor,³ whose monograph I summarize here, so far as it concerns the monasteries.

There was originally no division in the revenues of an abbey. As the Rule prescribes, there was but one Possessor, *i.e.* the whole *community*. The abbot had indeed almost absolute control of these common goods, but he had no separate possession. Nor was he even the earliest *proprietaryus*; it was the monks (or, among Canons Regular, the canons) who took the lead here (p. 2). For, in process of time, part of the revenues was earmarked for the sustentation of the brethren; the rest went to other requirements of the institution. The earmarked sum was called the *peculiare fratrum*, or their *portio*; then, rarely in the ninth century but commonly in the tenth, the word “table”, *mensa*, is used for this monastic portion, since by far the greater part of it went in fact to the refectory. One great abbey has left a list of serfs given by pious donors, from about 830 onwards, “to the *mensa* of the brethren” (p. 8). That this early partition of the revenues was, sometimes at least, definitely in the interest of the brethren as against the abbot, is shown by the case quoted in Matthew Paris under the year 1251, when the abbot of Westminster struggled to get this compact annulled, and strove for a papal judgement in his favour: the monks, however, with the king’s help, held their ground.⁴ So, again, at Bury, Jocelin tells us how abbot Robert [1110] was glorified by the monks because he had first separated the two *mensae*, and how those of his own day attempted, by keeping Robert’s anniversary with

¹ Wilkins, *Concilia*, II, 721, § 6. For similar definitions see Dionysius Cartusianus, *Opp.* xxxviii, 369, 371; Nider, *De Ref. Rel.* pp. 79–83.

² *Vet. et Nova Disc.* pars III, lib. ii, cc. 20, 26, 27.

³ Emile Lesne, *L’Origine des menses dans le temporel des églises et des monastères de France* (fasc. VII of *Mémoires et travaux des facultés catholiques de Lille*), 1910. My numbers refer to his pages.

⁴ See Thomassinus, III, ii, c. 26, § 2 (p. 349).

unusual solemnity, to register a protest against abbot Samson, whom they accused of undue encroachment.¹ But Lesne points out that, however we may regard these separations from the purely business point of view, they were a sign of relaxing discipline (p. 48). This is brought out most emphatically by the report of certain Cluniac visitors, fresh from the reforming Council of Constance, in 1418. Dealing with the house of Hasungen, which consisted of fifteen monks with an abbot, they record how, after much persuasion, they induced both parties to cancel the partition made of old between abbot and convent, "considering the harm to souls and the inconveniences which have followed therefrom, and which will follow in future". When once the consent of both parties had been procured, then that partition-deed was cancelled "as contrary to Canon Law itself and to the Rule of St Benedict, and as repugnant to community of life between the said abbot and his convent".²

However this partition may have begun at the wish of the brethren, abbots soon began to bend it to their own purposes. It left them, in many cases at least, more economic freedom: the earmarking of one portion for the community implied a similarly definite allocation of the rest to the abbot, and gave them the less opportunity of protest; so long as their own portion was paid, he might more easily apply all the rest to his own personal purposes. This freedom, valuable for good abbots, became fatal under inferior successors. One of the greatest of monastic economists was Irminon, abbot of St-Germain-des-Prés [830]; his Domesday Book (*Polyptyque*), which is a model of businesslike disposition, marked very clearly the convent's and the abbot's shares. After his death, the abbey was taken in hand by Count Robert of Paris, who saw here a rich and easy prey: and thus, for some 90 years, the Counts of Paris called themselves abbots of St-Germain and fed upon the abundant revenues marked out by Irminon.³ This example was followed in nearly all the great abbeys of France: even Louis the Pious, while he deplored the fact that laity preyed thus upon the revenues and introduced indiscipline elsewhere, felt himself unable to attack this abuse

¹ *Chronica*, C.S. p. 66. For the actual charter of separation, confirmed by Henry I, see Dugdale-Caley, III, 153.

² Duckett, *Visitations*, p. 131, with emendation of *animarum* for the unmeaning *annuarum*.

³ Thomassinus, III, ii, c. 20, § 7 (p. 330).

directly (p. 41). These abbots were "merely invading parasites in their relation to the monastery"; we have, in fact, the first beginnings of the fatal *commendam* system. Consequently, in this first half of the ninth century, "there are men who think and say that religious establishments should be stripped of all beyond what is needed for sustentation of the clergy and monks; the rest should be shared among the men who defend the kingdom" (p. 42). Here are the first mutterings of that storm which finally broke over England under Henry VIII. Much of this was in fact carried out, not systematically but piecemeal. "Teutsindus, abbot of St-Wandrille, granted to his own relations and to the knights of the realm almost one-third of the abbey's possessions"; and by 787 five-eighths had thus disappeared (p. 44). Thus, Charles Martel, the ruler who had started this scramble, was seen by visionaries in the deepest pit of hell, in spite of his great victory over the Moslems which had saved Christendom.

Thus the community of monks, the "convent", had often bitter cause to regret this partition of goods between themselves and the abbot, though they themselves might have been the first to desire it (p. 63). Moreover, it was contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Rule (pp. 64, 143). Yet Louis the Pious, in his struggle for monastic reform with the help of Benedict of Aniane, was able to aim at no more than limiting and regularizing this abuse. Lesne, in his 8th chapter, traces the story to the end of the ninth century, by which time the separation was practically universal in all abbeys. The abbot's share was originally enormous in many cases. At St-Denis, in 862, he had more than the 150 monks put together; at Lobbes and at St-Germain-des-Prés the shares were about equal (pp. 120-2; cf. p. 31). Gradually, however, the conventual *mensa* grew preponderant, and with just cause. Among fresh endowments, by far the greater share fell in to the monks who performed the actual praying and Mass-sacrifice and hospitality (pp. 140ff.). Thus the princely incomes of many later medieval abbots were seldom so great in proportion as those which their predecessors in the Dark Ages had enjoyed; and, such as they were, much had probably been gained by gradual encroachment upon the conventual *mensa*; an encroachment favoured by that despotic power which the Rule grants to the head of the community. Moreover, in England at

any rate, the partition was sometimes modified under economic stress.¹

This fatal wedge, then, was driven into the Rule even before Charles the Great; and we shall see how time and custom forced it inexorably forward.² We may pick up the thread again at the end of the twelfth century, when (as we have already seen) Alexander III and the Third Lateran Council had to intervene. To Peter the Precentor of Notre-Dame-de-Paris [1200] is ascribed a *Treatise against Proprietary Monks* which is printed at the end of his *Verbum Abbreviatum* (Migne, *P.L.* ccv, col. 366). Those (he writes) will go to hell with Judas; they lose heaven for the sake of contemptible dross. They are well endowed with all necessities; yet, like jackdaws, they steal what they do not really need. A monk hides money in his cowl. When Tobias heard the kid bleating, he said to his wife, "take heed, lest perhaps it be stolen" (Tobit ii, 21). Yet (asks Peter) "Where is the abbot [nowadays] who resembles even this blind Tobias, and who, hearing the coin not bleating but clinking under the cowl, says 'take heed lest that be stolen money'?" Some monks even lend it out furtively at usury. "Nowadays monks are suffered to possess money openly, and even to steal it and share their gains with the authorities of their convent."³ If only they would take heed to that instructive case of the dying nun!

As she lay at her last gasp, when she had caused them to take out and restore the few coins that she had in her coffer, she was yet unable to breathe out her last breath until a halfpenny, which had

¹ Jocelin of Brakelond is a first-rate witness here; see pp. 4, 55, 66, 88. Samson's autocracy, healthy as it was in fact, might easily have been exercised unjustly; there was nobody to whom the convent could complain of the abbot's injustice in an exempt abbey. Samson did in fact encroach on the sacristan's powers, however healthily; when opposed, he exclaimed in wrath "Am not I your abbot? Is it not my business to dispose of the goods of the monastery committed to me, so long as I act wisely and after God's guidance?" On a later occasion, "we found at last that there is no lord who will not lord it over us, and it is perilous to fight against one stronger and more powerful than oneself". *E.g.* Snape, p. 53.

² The process may be traced briefly in Thomassinus, p. 348, §§ 1, 2; p. 349, § 6; p. 351, § 1, p. 356, § 11. He writes, "These were the steps of decay in Regular discipline... These partitions are not consonant to the Rule of St Benedict... Certainly this [bull of Pius V, 1568] describes the falling discipline of the Regular Orders through the partition of temporal goods", etc. Yet he points out how even popes helped it on to some extent, though indirectly, p. 348, § 4.

³ Col. 568: *comitis* corrected to *communitatis* by MS. Trin. Camb. 372.

remained hidden at the bottom, had been cast forth: then, at last, she passed in peace unto the Lord.

Many similar stories come in medieval collections of anecdotes for preachers; and the theme is common among disciplinary writers and chroniclers.

For, when once monks found themselves on that slippery slope of partition, they slid fatally downwards and downwards. Presently, we find not only the abbot (or prior, in a priory) with his separate *peculium*, but the other conventual officers also, the "obedientiaries". The cellarer, for instance, had to defray the whole table expenses of the convent, and the sacristan all the services and upkeep of the church. For this they had special revenues earmarked to them; and, by a very natural encroachment, they were tempted to treat those revenues as their own. It was often, as we shall see later on, only too easy to avoid presentation and audit of accounts.

Innocent III (1215) forbade the growing custom of treating an "obedience" as a life-office, and its income as a "benefice".¹ The Council of Tours (1231) repeated this. That of London (1268) insisted that obedientiaries must render accounts. The Bury St Edmunds records show the separate incomes of all the obedientiaries in 1281;² and Thomassinus notes that there is no explicit evidence there either for strict account or for safeguard against life-tenure of office.³ Whence he sums up:

We must confess, therefore, that even before 1300 the claustral officials had begun to follow in the abbots' steps, having their own separate *mensa* and claiming perpetual administration of the funds consigned to them. . . . Among the Premonstratensians, shortly before 1300, it was granted to abbots and priors who abdicated that, for the rest of their lives, they should enjoy a yearly pension of 100 *livres* from those possessions which they had newly acquired and added to the monastery during their administration (p. 351, § 8).

In 1343, the English General Chapter of the Benedictines legislated in view of the difficulty of removing obedientiaries,

¹ These early steps may be followed in Thomassinus, p. 348, §§ 2, 4, 5; p. 349, § 5; p. 350, § 8; p. 354, § 8.

² The document itself is in Dugdale-Caley, III, 156; it is summarized by Snape, p. 24.

³ Removals, however, were frequent; however the obedientiary might struggle to keep it as a life-office, he probably succeeded only seldom. See, for instance, Snape, pp. 54 ff.

and of the natural reluctance of these officials to help more necessitous offices out of their own superfluity.¹ This exclusiveness, however, broke down gradually under growing inequalities of income; obediences were gradually burdened with all kinds of payments to other departments.² These offices gradually obtained such importance and, by custom, such independence that, in one case, we find this recognized even by the lawcourts. Theoretically, the only person recognized by state law was the abbot; "in the view of the king's courts, the abbot's power [in the monastery] was that of an absolute owner".³ Yet, in [1494], the Star Chamber allowed a copyholder to bring an action against an obedientiary, the kitchener of Malmesbury.⁴ In 1338, the "obediences" at Tavistock had long been farmed out, like estates.⁵ Petrus Cantor tells us of obediences actually bought and sold;⁶ but monastic discipline was, on the whole, more irregular on the Continent than in England.

The growing financial independence of obedientiaries can be traced in many chronicles and monastic monographs, wherever we find details of economic history. Abbot Samson of Bury, the strong man, was able to destroy 31 out of those 33 seals under which the tribe of obedientiaries had run up separate debts with the Jews; and, when the mismanagement was too gross, he even put the offices into commission under hired clerks of his own.⁷ But only a most exceptional man could thus have dealt without arousing rebellion in the monastery; and the general story is that

¹ Pantin, II, 38-9.

² Snape, pp. 35, 47, 64 ff.; Power, pp. 134 ff.

³ Pollock and Maitland, I, 504.

⁴ Snape, p. 35.

⁵ *Reg. Grandisson*, II, 886.

⁶ Migne, *P.L.* ccv, col. 370. By this time a large number of small priories, dependent cells, had become so decayed that only two or three monks lived there, under a so-called "prior manualis", who was removable, in law, at the will of the superior of the parent house. Peter writes: "Item, cells were wont to be called *obediences*, because brethren did not go thither unless compelled by obedience. Now, however, they are bought and sold"—*sunt vinditiae* (*sic* in Migne) *et emptitiae*.

⁷ Jocelin of Brakelond, *C.S.* pp. 22, 28, 67; Snape, pp. 54, 133. Compare Bishop Orford's Ely Register, f. 59 a. This bishop, in 1307, commanded the officers to keep and to render proper accounts, "lest, if any obedientiary, after he has left his office, be burdened with any debt, or ill-famed about the country-side for non-payment of creditors, his successor through that cause lose the grace of credit among the common people". Caesarius of Heisterbach has excellent common-sense remarks about obedientiaries, *Hom.* IV, 128.

of encroachment in the other direction; the obedientiary is a little king in his own office. Trithem, in his addresses to the reformed monks of his own congregation, singles this out as one of the main strongholds of private property: "In witness to their *proprietas*, and in contradiction to the statutes and the laws and their Rule, they live each in his own chambers, wherein they busy themselves not as monks but as clerks."¹

A few concrete examples may suffice, from different places and times.

About 1185 Abbot Samson of St Edmundsbury tolerated, for his superior business qualities, a not very reputable monk who was in charge of four of the abbey manors; but at last he seized the man's chests and found that he had laid up a nest-egg of £133, an enormous sum. The same reforming abbot "caused the sacristan's buildings [*domos*] in the graveyard to be levelled to the very foundations, as unworthy to stand on the earth, by reason of the frequent drinkings and certain unmentionable things, which he himself had seen unwillingly and in grief when he was sub-sacristan".² The prior of a dependent cell in Limousin had so profited by his office when he died in 1215, that he was found to possess 500 *livres*.³ A document of 1334 shows unabashed *proprietas* among the brethren of St-Martin-d'Autun; they even had separate households.⁴ At St-Denis the obedientiaries tried to claim a life-interest in their offices, representing that, as each was taxed separately by the pope, each might count as an ecclesiastical benefice. One of these, at least, got papal bulls in his favour, but the abbot deprived him notwithstanding; another was frustrated in his claim by a decision which the abbot obtained from the Parlement in 1414.⁵ At Durham, just before the suppression, at least three obedientiaries had separate bedchambers; the bursar, the terrarius, and the prior's chaplain.⁶ Dom P. de Monsabert, in his essay on *The Inner Organization of the Priory of Ligugé*, traces "that movement which, during the whole Middle Ages, tended to transform

¹ *Dehortationes ad Monachos*, c. xi (p. 268). Bromyard also speaks of the temptation for obedientiaries to use public funds for private purposes, *Sum. Pred. R.* v, 60.

² Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. pp. 23, 90.

³ *St-Martial*, p. 94.

⁴ Bulliot, 287; cf. 179.

⁵ Félibien, p. 337.

⁶ *Rites of Durham* (1903), pp. 99, 100, 101.

Benedictine monasteries into chapters of prebendaries, by the creation of distinct revenues earmarked for the monks and the obedientiaries".¹

This separation might be used in a perfectly laudable fashion; and three English cases may be given where nobody would find fault except with the dangerous infraction of the Rule. Thomas Isham, fourteenth-century sacristan of St Augustine's, Canterbury, not only satisfied the ordinary demands of his office, but saved enough from its income, or procured enough money in other ways, to expend £2167, partly on buildings, but by far the larger part on church ornaments and plate.² The Ely monk whose office was to guard St Etheldreda's shrine "built a chamber against the north wall of the presbytery, and, I think, lived there".³ From Ely also, in 1335, we get a very curious case concerning none other than the great sacrist Alan of Walsingham, who was the financial begetter, and perhaps to some extent the designer, of the splendid lantern tower of the Cathedral. We have record, under the year 1335, of

a camera built by the Sacrist between the outer Hostelry and the Infirmary of the Church, of which the use and convenience was to be his during his, Alan's, life; but if any one of his brethren needed it for the recreation of his mother, sister or any woman of such near and honourable relationship as would give rise to no suspicion, or for any other person of good name who cannot conveniently be received elsewhere, he shall enjoy the advantages there in the Camera, for that occasion but not beyond it.⁴

Canon Chapman benevolently supposes that Alan built this hall (which was also called "The Painted Chamber", and still survives in the house of the canon of the second stall) as "a noble work of thoughtful kindness for the monks who under stress of sickness or of old age were forced to spend the last years of their life within the Infirmary". "It is not an unreasonable assumption", he adds, "that some special painting was added to the rooms prepared for the sick and aged in the Infirmary to give more cheerful aspect to them." Mr Seiriol Evans, who is now transcribing and studying the rich collection of Ely rolls, informs me that, at least from the fourteenth century onwards, all the chief obedientiaries at Ely had their separate house and staff, and

¹ *Revue Mabillon* (1929), XIX, 226.

² Thorne, *Chronica*, col. 1196.

³ Atkinson, p. 12.

⁴ Chapman, I, 139; Atkinson, p. 122.

to some extent at least a separate table. This, however, would only be during the day: it was a more serious indiscipline when obedientiaries slept away from the dormitory at night. Yet in 1526 the bishop of Norwich, after hearing full evidence, published among his clauses for reformation, "Dom John Sall [precentor and commoner] has a chamber and a bed therein, contrary to the ancient custom, by occasion whereof women come to his bedchamber." Other monks, at an earlier visitation, had been found with rooms of their own and had been forbidden: Sall had defied the prohibition which they had obeyed.¹ The same volume supplies a case from Walsingham in 1514. Here it was deposed that "brother William Hutton cometh not to choir, but sitteth all day in the building called in vulgar tongue *the halibred hous*, daily eating and drinking there". This "holy-bread house" was in all probability the sacristan's private room, in which the holy wafers were baked. Hutton was "custos of the Lady Chapel", as we see from other depositions, which refer to his choir-shirking in milder terms: "he is unprofitable [*inutilis*] and cometh not to matins; he hath been absent sixty times this year". The satirist Gower, at the end of the century, writes how, in the Benedictine and other "possessionate" Orders, unchastity possesses "the officials who go about gathering the rents; then they spend and give many a penny, whereof they give no account to the abbot, for the indulgence of their lechery". And again, these officers sometimes amass money like merchants; they keep their own household and hounds and hawks; they lack nothing but wives; nay, not always even that.² In Gower's lifetime (1378), a picturesque incident meets us from a French priory.

Landry de Mercy, prior of [a dependent cell to St-Martin-d'Autun], had buried, in the garden of a house wherein he dwelt outside the priory, 172 gold florins in a pewter pint-pot marked with his cypher.

¹ *Visitations*, C.S. pp. 199, 201, 205. Dr Jessopp (introd. pp. xx, xxi) ignores this last note, the most important of all, and tries to jest the whole matter away in his usual fashion. His apologia rests, among other things, on a misreading and misunderstanding of the actual text; *caligae cum diploide* means "trunk-hosen and doublet", and *crepidis* (misprinted *trepidis* and furnishing food for the Doctor's ridicule) refers to the fashionable pointed shoes which were almost as definitely against regulations as the indecent doublet and hose. The whole of pp. xix-xxii of this introduction flies in face of the actual text.

² *Mirour*, ll. 9133 ff., 21,036 ff.

On his death-bed he mentioned this treasure to his servant-maid and the bystanders, enjoining them to hand it over to the abbot of St-Martin as its lawful possessor. But the bailiff of St-Pierre-le-Montier, getting wind of this, claimed it in the king's name as treasure-trove, and took possession of it to the abbot's damage. The abbot appealed to the Parlement at Paris, which condemned the bailiff and made him disgorge.¹

The *Revue Mabillon* quotes a case from Montier-la-Celle as instancing neglect of "the thunders which threatened proprietary monks". In 1517 the prior claustral died, and "they found in his coffers the enormous sum of 237 *livres* 2s. 6d. in gold, with a note of hand for 200 *livres*".² At the Cluniac house of Coincy, according to a document of [1450], there was a definite rule that "those obedientiaries who sleep in chambers [of their own] must have beds made according to the Rule"; so also at Gaye near Troyes, and Longpont. At Nanteuil it was decreed that "the monks must sleep in the same building and take their meals together": so also at Montdidier. At St-Étienne, "there must be a dormitory according to the Rule"; so at Bougesant and Aunes.³ Jean Godefroy, in that article, describes this process by which the obedientiaries there had each his own official income, and adds:

whatever was the intention, very probably defensible, the result was unfortunate. The claustral officers followed in the footsteps of the priors, and, in process of time, there grew up the main abuses which were a natural consequence: first of all, private property for the monks; then, continual changes of offices and pluralism, running parallel with the worldly life which these monks led.⁴

A striking instance of this pluralism comes from the history of St-Germain at Auxerre. Claude de Charmes, who was abbot in about 1510, held also the abbey of St-Bénigne at Dijon. He resigned the former in consideration of a pension of 600 ducats of gold, and from St-Bénigne "he kept for himself only the benefice of kitchener at the [dependent] monastery of St-Seine, which was then very lucrative".⁵

¹ Bulliot, p. 291.

² Vol. XXI (1931), p. 198.

³ Marrier, *Bib. Clun.* 1712, 1713, 1714.

⁴ *Revue Mabillon* (1931), XXI, 33.

⁵ Henry, p. 367.

Moreover this kind of thing, like so many other irregularities in Church discipline, was indirectly fostered by the ease with which almost any kind of relaxation could be bought at the Roman curia. Here, for instance, is a papal indult of A.D. 1400.

To John de Ripon, Cistercian monk of St Mary's, Fountains. Confirmation, with exemplification, of the letters—*Considerantes diversos*, of abbot Robert and the convent, dated at Fountains 20 April 1400, granting to him, for life, for his manifold services in foreign parts, the room annexed to the infirmary which was inhabited by the late William Gower, with fire and light; a clerk or other honest servingman (*puerum*) to wait on him, with the same food, clothing and wage as a like servant (*servienti*) of the abbot; exemption from choir, cloister—except from Mass in choir—and chapter—except the abbot is present; leave to walk about (*spaciari*) as often as he wishes within the precincts (*ambitum*) of the monastery, and to talk to those he meets, where talking is not forbidden, and to drink with his visitors in his room, provided that he do not introduce other monks without leave; when ill in bed to have one of the monks, chosen by him, with the abbot's consent, to minister to him and stay and eat with him; to retain his office of forester of Nidirdall, etc.¹

It adds to the significance of this document that the indult is granted not for anything he had done in that cloister where, by the 66th Chapter of his Rule, all his life should normally have been spent, but for "his manifold services in foreign parts". Still more startling is an indult of a few months later (Jan. 1401):

To Robert Wynchestre, Benedictine monk of Athelneye, in the diocese of Wells. Indult to retain for life the room formerly assigned to him by the abbot and still in his possession, and to dispose, without requiring licence of the abbot and convent or other, of goods acquired in the monastery from his offices and salary, or acquired without the same.

It would be difficult to imagine any more definite contradiction of Innocent III, the Lateran Council, and Canon Law, according to which "the abdication of property, like as the keeping of chastity, is so annexed to the monastic Rule that not even the Supreme Pontiff can grant an indulgent licence".²

¹ *C.P.L.* v, 354.

² *Decret. Greg.* lib. III, tit. xxv, c. 6.

CHAPTER XXII

GROWING *PROPRIETAS*

SYSTEMATIC *proprietas*, then, started very naturally with the partition of conventual and abbatial *mensae*; by an equally natural extension, it passed on to the earmarking of obedientiary revenues; and finally, by almost inevitable steps, it laid hold upon the whole community, in all but a stricter minority of houses.

The ordinary rank-and-file monk, the cloister-brother [*claustralis*] as he was commonly called in contradistinction from the obedientiaries, naturally followed the example of his betters. From a fairly early date, the conventual *mensa* itself was to some extent definitely shared out among the separate monks: a monastic *prebenda* or *corrodium* was reckoned at such and such a value in money or in kind: we find this, for example, at Evesham in [1340].¹ Again, one of the earliest pretexts seized upon was that of clothes-money. The *vestiarius* was bound to deal out a complete fresh change of clothes yearly: necessary enough, seeing that they served for night as well as day. As soon as detailed documents begin to be plentiful, we find monks often receiving money instead of clothes.

This custom cannot be better introduced than in the words of Gilles li Muisis, abbot of a very great house—St-Martin-de-Tournai. In his poem on the monasticism of his time [1350] he writes:

Men were wont to give them clothes; now they will have clothes-money and caskets and coffers, and each his own cupboard; if we wish to take these away from them, they will at once put an embargo on all that is done, and will gainsay it. It is the favour of the abbot, so say the monks nowadays; he gives money for them to be decent and to clothe them; but the Rule, by God! clearly says the contrary, and St Benedict also neither says it nor commands it. Therefore he committed a great sin who first brought this [custom] in, when money was given for clothes and for shoes. He liberated many folk from the constraint of keeping the Rule; therefore I believe that he has an

¹ *Chron. Evesham*, R.S. p. 291.

evil reward for this poison. Pope Benedict [XII], by his constitution which he decreed for the Black Monks [in 1336], clearly mentioned this; but in many abbeys men neglect this intention because he only gave this as a monition. I will not determine these questions and answers; I cannot decide whether it is right or wrong; there is no fortress so strong but that it may be undermined; each bears his own burden when he comes to the end [of life].¹

Gilles writes as if this had long been growing at Tournai; and certainly the system was definitely fixed at St-Martial-de-Limoges as early as 1213.² Stephen Langton forbade it in his Council of Oxford in 1222 in terms which imply that it was already common: so, again, did the English General Chapter of 1249.³ The papal legate Othobon, in his Council of London (1268), renewed this prohibition still more emphatically.⁴

Lest Satan be given occasion, by the vice of *proprietas*, to build upon the sinner's back, and the man himself be given occasion to sin, we decree that, whensoever any monk or any other Religious shall need clothes, shoes, and other necessities of life, he whose office it is to minister such things shall not give him, in lieu thereof, money or coin. . . . If the official presume to act otherwise, let him be deprived of that office wherein he hath sinned, and given occasion for sin.

At St-Trond, in 1257, by a custom apparently much earlier, each monk received yearly for clothes 4s. of Liège, which was the equivalent of 2s. sterling, or about £4 to-day.⁵ The visitors of Westminster in 1269 found that clothes-money was "too often appropriated to other uses".⁶ In 1275 the Cluniac visitors forbade the practice at Monks Horton whereby "each monk received 40 pence for a fur cloak".⁷ In 1305 they were still struggling against the practice.⁸ In [1275] and 1303 it was blamed by the visitors of Holy Trinity, Aldgate.⁹ The Whalley monks received £2 each for dress-money.¹⁰ The nuns of Campsey had a regular allowance in 1370.¹¹ In 1350 the bishop

¹ Li Muisis, I, 170.

² *St-Martial*, LXXXVII, 306.

³ Pantin, II, 59, § 10.

⁴ *Lyndwood*, II, 146. The allusion is to Ps. cxxviii [cxxxix], 3, where the A.V. has "The plowers plowed upon my back", but the Vulgate runs "supra dorsum meum fabricaverunt peccatores".

⁵ *St-Trond*, p. 95.

⁶ *V.C.H. London*, p. 440 b.

⁷ Duckett, *Charters*, p. 125.

⁸ Duckett, *Visitations*, pp. 308-9.

⁹ *V.C.H. London*, p. 468.

¹⁰ Whitaker, *Whalley*, I, 124-6.

¹¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls* (1370), p. 6.

noted with pain this "corruption" at Gloucester abbey.¹ Benedict XII in his celebrated statutes for the reform of the Benedictine Order (1336) forbade it emphatically (§ 17). At the same time, he found it rooted even among the Cistercians. In 1398 the General Chapter of that Order went so far as to ratify a convention by which the Abbot of Chéseray granted regular clothes-money to his monks. In 1415 a nobleman was allowed to give his son, a Cistercian at Acey, a yearly pension of 100 *sols*.² By that time the practice had struck deep roots in many directions. Even a zealous reforming bishop, in 1405, permitted it to the Canons Regular of Oignies.³ In 1409 the monks of Dunfermline had £2 a year each.⁴ In 1450, that Abbot of Lyre who was equally distinguished for his additions to the church ornaments and for his disciplinary irregularities "was the first who arranged that the brethren should have clothes-money: 12 *livres* for the choir-brethren and 8 for the others".⁵ In 1418 the Cluniacs of Hasungen were forbidden clothes-money by their strict visitors, fresh from the Council of Constance;⁶ and, indeed, the Cluniac Order seems to have struggled longest in this field: for a General Chapter of 1458 forbade it again.⁷ Yet at almost this time (1482) we find that the English Premonstratensians had given up the struggle as hopeless. Their able and zealous superior, Bishop Redman, decreed at his visitation of West Dereham, while confirming the election of a new abbot, that the elect "should pay yearly to each of his brethren, without any delay, twenty shillings that he may be able to buy his garments honourably; and this [I command] under pain of contempt".⁸ The system was rooted at Durham before the Dissolution.⁹

Side by side with this disguised pocket-money we may put the undisguised *pensiones*. These we meet everywhere. At St Albans, in 1335, the system was already so deeply rooted that

¹ *V.C.H. Gloucs.* II, 58. The writer, in evident ignorance of Canon Law, takes upon himself to blame the bishop for his unnecessary sensitiveness on so trifling a point!

² Blanchot, pp. 122, 136, 140.

³ Martène, *Thesaurus*, III, 348 b.

⁴ *Reg. Dunferm.* p. 279.

⁵ *Lyre*, p. 197.

⁶ Duckett, *Visitations*, p. 136.

⁷ Thomassinus, III, 351 a.

⁸ *C.A.P.* III, 215.

⁹ *Rites of Durham*, Surtees Soc. 2nd ed. p. 95.

punishment was decreed for non-payment.¹ A little later it is traceable at St Augustine's, Canterbury.² At Doncaster, in 1449, "whenever a grant or lease was sealed with the abbey seal, it was the custom that half a mark should be divided among the [brethren, who numbered about 12], and there were other regular distributions of pocket-money".³ We shall come to this in greater detail in a later chapter.

The next step was, that each monk should receive his share, a dividend, of the available yearly income. This was systematic at Bolton priory as early as 1286.⁴ At St-Martin-d'Autun (1438) the reforming abbot prohibited by a formal decree the sale by any monk of any part of his daily "prebend".⁵ When, during the French wars, English kings sequestered the alien priories, they found it naturally convenient to put the monks upon this footing, and to take the surplus of their revenues. In Continental countries, after the Reformation, monasteries normally lapsed into this state, as we shall see when we come to the study of *commendam*.

But, long before this, we find cases where the monastery broke up into a series of separate households, quite apart from the separatist tendency of the obedientiaries. In 889 or 890, the monks of St-Père had houses of their own within the monastery, in which they trafficked with the bishop's approval.⁶ But this was at a time of social disorganization; there were strong separatist tendencies during those Dark Ages in many of the great Continental abbeys. It is far more significant to find that the papal legate Otho, in 1225, actually built upon something of this kind in England, though it may perhaps be argued that he was applying to our less irregular abbeys the rule which had been framed for those of Italy and Germany and France. In his project of taxation (1225), he prescribes that, where a separation of *mensae* has taken place, the convent shall pay as tax "as much as pertains to a single monk", and the abbot the same sum. This "pertains to" may possibly be a loose way of expressing "esti-

¹ *Gest. Abbat.* R.S. II, 307.

² *Excerpta*, pp. 9, 11.

³ *V.C.H. Oxon*, II, 88.

⁴ *Reg. Romeyn*, I, 56.

⁵ Bulliot, p. 306.

⁶ *Cart. St-Père*, p. 16; cf. cxcix. It is significant of the relaxation that the monk is called *canonicus* in this deed.

mated cost", but the implication seems more definite than this.¹

In [1255], at St-Bavon-de-Gand, the papal legate was compelled to interfere in the administration of the abbey, and to inflict extraordinary penalties among the monks who refused to take their meals in common or to assemble in church at the hours of prayer. He punished every hour of absence from choir or from chapter-meetings by the same number of days without wine. Those who absented themselves from the common meals without permission were to eat two days in the refectory sitting on the ground without table-cloth.

In 1448, "the monks were ordered to declare to their abbot in the confessional, on Easter Day, before they came to the Holy Table, their possessions in silver plate and jewels, with the amount of their debts and of what was owed to them".² At St-Trond, in 1257, under a strong and reforming abbot, it was prescribed that "each monk has 3 *deniers* a day for his kitchen and 3 for wine and $\frac{1}{2}d.$ for beer".³ At the Cluniac nunnery of Laveine (Auvergne), in 1286,

two nuns, named De Mozac, asserted [to the official visitors] that their friends had endowed the convent with 6 bushels of wheat per annum, on condition that they should have two of these so long as they lived. The prior had kept these, and refused to give them up, in spite of the legal documents which recorded these agreements. Another nun of the same priory, called De Beaujeu, complained that the prior similarly kept from her a bushel of wheat with which the convent had been endowed on the same conditions. A strange fashion of interpreting community-life and the vow of poverty! The visitors contented themselves with recording the claim and referring it back to the Abbot and Chapter [General of Cluny].⁴

In 1312 the rich abbey of Münster passed a resolution, which was confirmed by the Bishop of Bâle, to limit their congregation to sixteen persons, each of whom should have a definite *prebend*, or statutory allowance. Though the excuse given for this is that the abbey revenues would be overstrained by a larger number, this is plainly contradicted by a document of only twenty-seven

¹ Oxenedes, *Chronica*, R.S. p. 138.

² Van Lokeren, pt. 1, 98, 139.

³ *St-Trond*, p. 95. This would equal a little more than 2d. sterling, and we may regard it as the rough equivalent of 7s. to-day.

⁴ A. Bruel, in *Bib. Éc. Chartes* (1877), pp. 114ff.

years later: a series of statutes enacted by the abbot for the government of his monastery. Here are some of them, as summarized by Dom Calmet:¹ (1) The abbot shall now give 20 *sols*, instead of the 10 hitherto given, for the monks' garments: and the kitchen allowance shall be raised from 13 to 20 per monk. (2) After each monk's death, his movable possessions shall be sold to pay his debts, and the balance of his prebend for that year shall go to the same object; if he has no debts, the money shall be used for church ornaments. (3) The monks' yearly allowance of twelve quartals of corn shall now be raised to thirteen. Yet apparently they were not now at their complement of sixteen, but only twelve (p. 117). In 1345 a fresh abbot, "in consideration of the smallness of the monks' prebends", gave the tithes of wine from Turckheim, estimated at 100 marks a year, to the monks. Of these, 5 *livres* of Bâle money were for church ornaments, and the remainder (*i.e.* the value of £61. 13s. 4d.) was to be given to the monks in wine: viz. one cart-load to each priest, ten *amae* to each deacon or subdeacon, and five to each monk in lower orders. As Dom Calmet remarks, this shows that the monks were now living not a community life, but individually, "though perhaps in the same cloister". He quotes a document of 1411 which shows that each monk came to the cellarer's hatch for his livery of bread and wine twice a day, after Mass and after vespers. A document of 1348 puts the keystone to this arch: "whosoever would be received into this monastery as a monk must pay to the abbot 10*l.* of Bâle, to each of the monks 1*l.* for his refecton, and 10*l.* to buy a piece of purple cloth for a church cope". And a monk's last will and testament of 1351 shows, in clearest detail, the emptiness of this pretence of poverty. He leaves all his individual possessions to the abbey: a house, garden, and wine-press at Turckheim, "and whatsoever I may happen to buy henceforward". Beyond the maintenance of three lamps, the yearly revenue of this legacy is to be devoted, half to the brethren who are present that year on Corpus Christi day, and half to a dole of bread for the poor; the two monks who administer these charities are to be paid for their trouble. The breach of vow inherent in all this is cloaked

¹ Calmet, *Münster*, pp. 110, 112, 136, 148; cf. pp. 114 ff. (list of the monks' privileges over townsfolk and peasants).

by the clause explaining that the whole is done with the consent of the abbot and the brethren.¹ It was a perfectly natural result of this quasi-independence that, in 1411, the abbot had to procure a privilege from the Emperor Wenceslas enabling him "to correct and do justice himself upon any monk who should disobey him, if convicted of any considerable fault"; *i.e.* the ordinary powers which the Rule and Canon Law had always most definitely granted.² In 1434 the community had shrunk to seven monks; and, before proceeding to the election of a new abbot, they passed a statute that

he should not be permitted to correct, nor to inflict any extraordinary punishment upon, any member of the community without the consent of the dean and chapter: for example, that he may not put him into the abbey prison, nor shut him up in the tower, nor put him in irons, nor excommunicate him, nor deprive him of his property.³

The enormously wealthy abbey of Murbach had much the same system of "prebends".⁴ At St-Martin-d'Autun, again, as early as 1334, we find the same system of separate households, which became general only at a much later date. This is evident not only for the clear specification of so much cloth for each monk's dress, and so much for his table (which might just conceivably have been the common table in the refectory) but from the fact that each is guaranteed his own liberal allowance of salt—"three measures a year"—which points clearly to separate cooking. Money distributions were to be made to each brother on certain feast-days; and if the monk specially commissioned with the administration of these revenues and distributions "died in possession of private property from other sources, not destined for the upkeep of the office itself, then this comes to Us [the abbot] as heirs of Our monk". A century later, the abbey's historian notes that

the possession of a private stock of money, forbidden by that vow of poverty which was one of the first foundations of the Rule, had become for the monks a cause of dissipation, of traffic, of purposeless wanderings abroad, and a convenient means for satisfying passions most contrary to the precepts of humility and continence.⁵

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 120-4.

² *Ibid.* p. 132.

³ *Ibid.* p. 135. By 1540 there were only two monks left in the abbey (p. 155).

⁴ Gatrio, I, 329.

⁵ Bulliot, 287, 307; cf. 179.

What was possible at about the same time at St Augustine's, Canterbury, transpires from a story told by the chronicler Thorne:¹ it is worth reading at length in Mr A. H. Davis's now accessible translation. Peter of Denne, a wealthy Canon Lawyer and pluralist, had at least one benefice with cure of souls, with



The monk and his money-box (Holbein, *Dance of Death*).

prebends in three cathedrals and two collegiate churches. He became involved, knowingly or innocently, in the rebellion of Thomas of Lancaster, and,

threatened publicly with spoliation of all his goods and even with death by great and powerful nobles whom he could not resist and against whom he had no defence, finding no other escape or help, was driven by this fear to take the monastic habit in this abbey, under the lord abbot Ralph, in 1322, the thirteenth year of his abbacy; and, entering Religion, on the third day he at once made his profession. His manner of entrance was as follows. This Master Peter de Denne, priest, entered the abbey of St Augustine not, as other men, absolutely, but under many conditions, manners, and pacts expressed openly by himself, and received and granted by those among whom he came in, both before his entrance and at the entrance itself. These were, that he retained, and would still retain, his chambers which he had built within the abbey precincts and his secular household, and also

¹ Twysden, *Scriptores Decem*, 1979, 2011, 2055, 2066 (c. xxxvi, § 1).

his goods to be distributed and expended and spent and given according to his own free will, and that he should not be bound to join with the monks in church, chapter, refectory, dormitory, cloister or elsewhere, to say divine service or to do any other duty; but he should be permitted to dwell with his household within his own chambers by day and night, and to spend his time in prayer, contemplation, study and other honest occupations as God might inspire him, and as might spring from the said Peter's free will. He added expressly that, by taking the habit, he did not intend or will to make any length of stay, or anything else, or in any way to bind himself to any observance of the Rule. Now, he wore the habit of a professed monk for full ten years, and thus, conversing peaceably and quietly among the brethren, he had been laudably and in many ways honoured by them; teaching canon law publicly in the schools both to monks and to secular folk from year to year, and had given advice to the abbot and elder brethren as the chief counsellor of the abbey, and had directed its secret and difficult business; moreover, he had full freedom to go and walk, within and without the precincts, at competent hours, at his own free will. Yet at last, sad to relate! this same Peter, unmindful of such indulgence and of such holy Religion and of his own salvation, and hearing that the danger whereof I have written above was no longer to be feared, or at least was greatly lessened, and considering that his entrance and profession had never been binding in law, nor could be, wished therefore to resume his secular habit and state, and intimated this in writing more than once to the abbot and convent. Since, however, they looked askance at his case, and denied him leave of egress, he committed apostasy as follows.

He cast off his frock and fled one night with one of his servants, assisted by four accomplices, two of whom brought ladders to scale the wall while the others held two horses ready. The alarm was given; the authorities hastened to close the seaports (for Peter had carried off six [silver] dishes and six salt-cellar). Presently he was located in the house of George of Bishopsbourne: the abbey servants kept watch on it three days and nights "in bitter cold", and at last entered the house and found him cunningly wrapped in a bundle of hemp—in *bungello canapis medio cautulose involutum*. He was brought ignominiously back to Canterbury and tried before the Bishops of Worcester and Norwich, who decided that, unless he willingly took the cowl again and allowed himself to be shorn, this should be done by force. At last, with difficulty, he was brought to make terms and sign a confession and recantation. The abbot naturally feared

insincerity here, and was anxious to make sure that Peter's very considerable private possessions should not go elsewhere at his death: therefore he considerably abridged Peter's liberty. But Peter managed to send "a certain false priest" to Rome, and procured a bull rehearsing how the abbey authorities were starving him of bodily and spiritual food, imprisoning him, and appropriating his possessions; therefore the prior of the cathedral was commissioned to interfere and set Peter at liberty. Yet the pope can scarcely have been ignorant of the perpetual rivalry between these two great abbeys at Canterbury. The result was natural: the cathedral prior found St Augustine's gates barred against him, all but one wicket, through which he entered with a few attendants, leaving 200 others outside. The Augustinians rejected the bull as spurious. Two days were spent in altercation; Peter was not allowed to speak in private with the prior; and, in the end, he repudiated all desire to escape from his abbey. Yet, adds the chronicler ruefully, it cost us more than £40 in law expenses, *plus* a yearly pension of £6. 13s. 4d. for life to one of our helpers. The story is of extraordinary interest in its cross-lights on monastic theory and practice: the Rule was a reality to be seriously reckoned with; yet here and there a man could drive a coach and horses through it, and procure a bull demanding his freedom as one who had never been a monk but in pretence—*similato cum animo* (2061. 18). This kind of thing, though seldom in so gross a form, became more and more frequent, especially in Continental countries after the Reformation. Dom Baunier estimates that the majority of Benedictine abbeys in France, from the fifteenth century to the Revolution, had such separate households.¹

Among nuns, this system of separate households was far more universal and deeply rooted. Professor Power has treated this in Chapter VIII of her *Medieval English Nunneries*, and I shall have to deal briefly with it in my next volume, when I come specifically to the women's houses. Here it is enough to say that the causes are fairly obvious. In the first place, far more women than men were thrust, more or less unwillingly, into the cloister.² Secondly, their housewifely instincts naturally struggled against

¹ *Recueil hist. des archevêchés*, etc. (1906), introd. p. xxvii.

² Cf. Power, *loc. cit.* pp. 25 ff.

some of the communistic provisions of the Rule. And, thirdly, this particularism was encouraged by their parents and relations. Not only were dowries far more frequently exacted for nuns than for monks, but the sums were, as a rule, far greater, since the nunneries were poorly endowed in comparison, and the dowry system had become almost an economic necessity in many places. It was almost inevitable, then, that the nun with the bigger dowry should expect, and her friends should expect for her, a more liberal share of the conventual goods. Moreover, friends sent occasional presents to their protégées in coin or in kind, and the records show that it was generally impossible to compel the recipient to disgorge for common use. It is not surprising, then, that even strict visiting bishops should recognize this *fait accompli* for many generations before the Reformation, and should strive only to moderate a tendency which they were powerless to stem altogether.

Let us return, then, to the monks. A further temptation to *proprietas*, in their case, was their sacramental privilege in the Mass. The public wanted Masses for souls in purgatory and for their own souls when death should come; the public was willing to pay liberally, especially at death; here was an abundant source of revenue to the convent and, when monasticism drifted away from the strict Rule, to the individual monk. A typical case, of special interest accidentally because it refers to a well-known family, is that of old Judge Paston, founder of the family's greatness. In 1487 the prior of Norwich cathedral monastery wrote: "The seide William Paston, Justice, in his lyve was a speciallover and frende to our monastery." Therefore he chose to be buried there, and left by will

a serteyn londe, or annuyte of suche valewe, that every suche monke that syngith the last messe in the seide chapell, wher the body of the seide William Paston light beryed, schuld have that day that he songe messe ther iiii d. to pray for the soules of the seide William, and of Annes his wif, and for ther auncetrys, kynred, consanguynyte, affynyte, and frendes, and for all Cristen soules.¹

We find this kind of thing at least as early as 1225 in England and 1248 in France;² probably a good many earlier cases could

¹ *Paston Letters* (1890), III, 330.

² *Oxenedes*, R.S. p. 138; Chuzel, pp. 95, 116, 119.

be found. Again, in 1344, an Abbot of Evesham founded a weekly Mass for his own soul and those of other defunct brethren; the monk whose turn it was to sing it was to receive 2s. from the bursar of the convent.¹ Bishop Bateman of Norwich [1350], doctor of law and founder of Trinity Hall at Cambridge, founded for his own soul on the same proprietary system; the celebrant monk was to receive 2s. a week, but, apparently, to sing not weekly as at Evesham but daily.² We find three cases at Wells between 1374 and 1424.³ We find it at Westminster early in the fifteenth century.⁴ At Canterbury, "in those cases where the Chapter voluntarily undertook the commemoration of their benefactors, the priest-monks of the monastery were told off in turn to officiate at the altar selected for the special services, and a small payment, amounting to about two pence for each Mass, was made to them".⁵ Mass-moneys were regular and frequent at Westminster.⁶ Dugdale is full of similar records of pocket-money given to monks for Masses; *e.g.* vol. II, p. 260 *n.*, at the abbey convent of Bath. So, again, are county histories; here, for instance, is a Wymondham case from Blomefield's *Norfolk*.

In 1528, Sir William Knivet, Kt, was buried in [Wymondham] Monastery Church.... He gave £40 to the Monastery to pray for him, to the Abbot 20s., to every Monk being a Priest 6s. 8d., to each Monk not a Priest 3s. 4d., to Sir Thomas Thaxted, Monk and Celerer, to pray 10 years for his Soul, 5 Marks a year.

An interesting notice comes from Norwich Cathedral priory in 1526. One of the older brethren complained to the episcopal visitor that

The younger monks, after promotion to the priesthood, obtain licence from the prior to journey abroad [*peregrinandi*, on pilgrimage?] or to visit their friends; by reason whereof they ill spend whatsoever hath been given to them by their friends or offered at the celebration of their First Mass; and thus they return moneyless [*egeni*].⁷

¹ *Penwortham*, p. 50.

² Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, I, 414.

³ *Wells MSS.* (H.M. Stationery Office), pp. 395, 459, 467.

⁴ Snape, p. 65.

⁵ *Lit. Cant.* R.S. III, pref. lii.

⁶ *E.g.* Westlake, *Last Days*, pp. 21, 55, 102.

⁷ *Visitations*, C.S. (1888), p. 202.

These Mass-moneys sometimes reached in the aggregate a high figure: Mr Westlake unduly minimizes this. He writes of the monks' "slender individual incomes", and points out that the future Abbot Islip, while he was subalmoner, paid for the board and education of his sister Agnes £3. 7s. 8d. a year "from his small allowances".¹ But, when we consider that a private income of £5, at this date, made an Oxford fellow too rich to retain his fellowship, and that the whole income of some priests was not much more than what Islip was spending upon his sister, it is absurd to call this a slender allowance of pocket-money for a man who was already richly lodged, fed, and clothed. Mr Snape (p. 165) quotes the case of the three Westminster chantry-monks who, for their daily Mass, received £5 a year over and above such "findings, profits and rewards" as were received by all the cloister-monks alike. This was in 1533.

In England, however, Mass-moneys seem never to have gone quite so far as on the Continent. Here is the will of Abbot Girard at Montier-la-Celle in 1534. He left 36 *livres* a year for the monks who should say a Mass for him daily; and, in addition, for five anniversaries. The will rehearses

And, in order that God our Creator may vouchsafe to accept the said prayers to His praise, the said reverend Abbot hath resolved and doth resolve that at each of the said anniversaries the pittancer of the abbey shall assemble the monks thereof and distribute to them 40 *sols tournois*, and expend a like sum of 40 *sols* upon a pittance and 10 *sols* to the poor, at the pittancer's discretion.

Again

in order that brother Nicholas Challemelle, the present precentor, and his successors may be the better inclined to keep the choir of the said church and to teach the choirboys and monks of the abbey,

a special endowment is bequeathed. The archivist who publishes this adds:

I need not insist upon these singular dispositions which favour private property among the monks, nor upon the necessity for stimulating the precentor's zeal.²

¹ *Last Days*, pp. 21, 28. A little later than this, a single weekly Mass was bringing to the Westminster community nearly £10 a year: but this was exceptional (p. 102).

² *Revue Mabillon* (1931), XXI, 210.

Jouenneaux wrote concerning his own France, in 1503, against those monks

who are under necessity of saying Mass [on that particular day]—*necessity*, I say, for there are few in a monastery of this [unreformed] kind who are wont to celebrate for devotion's sake, unless this fatal money be added also.¹

It became quite common, also, to leave small sums of money to pay monks or friars for sermons at anniversaries or similar occasions. The following instance will suffice:

Know all men that I, brother Louis de Rucheville, Prior of the Austin Friars, have received from the venerable and honourable Jean Hilaire, Receiver of the City of Orléans, the sum of 16 *sols*, by reason of the sermon preached by me in the cloister of Sainte-Croix, at the procession to St Paul's on the Sunday after Ascension Day. In witness whereof I have written this parchment with mine own hand, and signed it with my sign manual. Given this year of our Lord 1429, on the day above-named.

Louis de Rucheville.²

Thus, by a natural extension of laxity, monks slipped back, for their own sakes, into that position of parish priests which they had originally undertaken for altruistic missionary purposes, and which, after ripe experience, Canon Law had forbidden as dangerous to the monk's own soul.³ Individual instances crop up casually over and over again in the later Middle Ages, even in England, where on this, as on many other points, Church life was more regular than on the Continent. In 1474, for instance, a monk of Canterbury has "capacyte to be exempt fro the relygyon", since he holds the parochial benefice of Margate.⁴ In 1520 the episcopal visitor of Norwich Cathedral priory records that "Dom John Lakenham is serving the parish cure of Martham alone"; that is, in double violation of Canon Law, which strictly forbade the monk to dwell alone even in a dependent priory.⁵ But, in fact, these violations were by that time

¹ *French Monasticism*, p. 27.

² *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique de l'Orléanais* (1884), XVIII, 331. Two similar receipts from brother Robert Baignard, of the Order of St Dominic, have survived from 1429 and 1430. This procession was instituted on the day of the raising of the Siege of Orléans, by way of thanksgiving (*ibid.* pp. 247, 279).

³ See verdict of papal nuncio in Switzerland, ch. ix, p. 162 of this book. Cf. *Medieval Studies* (1915), xi, 6, 16.

⁴ *Lit. Cant.* R.S. III, 272 ff.

⁵ *Visitations*, C.S. (1888), p. 193.

systematic, for all who could buy exemptions at the Roman Court. I have not come across an example earlier than 1397 in the *Papal Letters* or *Petitions*: but in that year there are five, and thenceforward they are frequent. I give here the first two examples:

(i) To the abbot of St Mary's, Kalldri, in the diocese of York. Mandate to reserve to Richard Brunby, Benedictine monk of St Mary's without the walls, York, priest, a benefice with or without care of souls, according to his fitness after the usual examination in Latin, value not exceeding 80 pounds *petits Tournois*, in the common or several gift of the said abbot and convent, and accustomed to be held by monks of the said monastery (*Dignum arbitramur*).

(ii) To John Oneachayn, Benedictine monk of St Blaise's in *Cantoseculo* (S. Biagio della Pagnotta), Rome. Dispensation to him—who formerly received papal dispensations on account of illegitimacy as the son of a priest, being then a secular clerk with the tonsure only, (i) to be ordained and hold a benefice even with cure, (ii) to hold any compatible benefices with cure and without, even if canonries and prebends, dignities with cure, major and elective, *personatus* or offices in metropolitan or cathedral churches, and to exchange them as often as seemed good to him for similar or dissimilar compatible benefices, after which, being ordained subdeacon, he entered the Benedictine monastery of St Blaise, and made his profession—to be promoted to all dignities even if conventual and elective, administrations and offices, with cure of souls, of his and any other order to which he may be transferred. His illegitimacy need not be mentioned in future graces (*Religionis zelus, vite ac morum*).¹

It is very important to note the formula under which this second indult is recorded; it is abbreviated from the preamble which rehearses how the applicant has earned this favour by zeal for religion and regularity of life and morals. Taking twenty-four cases from the beginning, the middle, and the end of this volume, I find that in nineteen of them the indult bears *religionis zelus*, etc. Yet we have seen how the papal nuncio characterized the religion and life of such monk-rectors in 1576; and the system had been condemned with equal emphasis, in [1450], by the Oxford chancellor Thomas Gascoigne. He writes in one place:

Lately, a professed Religious obtained, for the sum of £10, exemption from his Order, in order that he might be a chaplain and honorific rector [*rector honoris*]; and yet in his deeds it became

¹ C.P.L. v, 9, 11. For other cases see Appendix.

manifest that in his life he was a chaplain of vice and horror [*capellanus vicii et horroris*]. Alas, alas, Lord God! for "blood hath touched blood" that is, one vice draws on, and impels to other vices, like an abominable chain.¹

And, on a later page, when he is enumerating the "seven Rivers of Babylon" beside which the Church found it hard to sing the Lord's song in a strange land, he reckons among them the multitude of perverse indults granted by the Roman Court.

O Lord God, do Thou grant that Thy Vicar upon earth, the Roman Pontiff, in the decrees which he publishes, . . . and in the dispensations and licences which he grants or denies, should answer with true mind and right godly zeal in those words of Holy Scripture, Numbers xxii (18): "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot alter the word of the Lord my God, to speak either more or less." . . . O! how many evils follow, and how many good things are destroyed, by these seven floods of Babylonian confusion! . . . O floods of Babylon! how many modern Religious have ye swept away from their habit and profession, and have ye made into parsons of parish churches and masters of hospitals and chaplains of honour, or rather of horror!

Gascoigne, though a great man and a champion of orthodoxy in his own time, had certainly the medieval love of violent language, and was no more exact than other scholars of those days whenever he dealt with round numbers; he is one of those two to whom we owe the quite incredible calculation that Oxford University had once boasted 30,000 students. But in this present case, as in many others, we are able to compare him with cold business records. The Calendars of Papal Letters published by the Master of the Rolls runs at present to eleven volumes, ending with the year 1464. Between that date and 1397 there are recorded, as I reckon, 400 of these indults; 164 to monks, 136 to Canons Regular, and 100 to friars. For the Canons Regular there is some sort of excuse; it was not fundamentally discordant from their Rule that they should act as parish priests; but in such cases two were bound to live together, and they were commissioned by their conventual superiors, not by papal indult. Even if we rule them out altogether, we still get 264 cases (an

¹ *Lib. Verit.* 70, 98. The quotation is from Hosea iv, 2: "Cursing, and lying, and killing, and theft, and adultery have overflowed, and blood hath touched blood."

average of four a year) of monks and friars who had bought these exemptions from the trammels of their Rule. And further analysis is still more significant. It will be found that fifty-nine of these favoured Religious were of illegitimate birth, and twenty-three pleaded noble race: *i.e.* the class which most commended itself to the Roman Court for "religious zeal and regularity of life" contained a remarkable proportion of nobles or well-to-do bastards. Indeed, from a very early date, as Dom Ursmer Berlière emphasized more clearly than any other writer, monasteries began to be almshouses for the illegitimate or otherwise inconvenient progeny of the upper classes. In 1247 Innocent IV sent to Fountains a batch of twenty dispensations for illegitimate monks—no doubt, not all to be used at the same time.¹ It was especially in the north (as the Pilgrimage of Grace afterwards showed) that the population was most dependent upon the monasteries, for good or for evil: and most of all, perhaps, in Ireland. In the above-quoted cases from the Papal Registers, whereas among the 361 English, Scotch and Welsh supplicants the proportion of illegitimates came to slightly less than 10 per cent., yet the thirty-nine Irish contributed to this invidious category no less than twenty-one cases, or 52 per cent. This is in accordance with the evidence we get from many other sources with regard to the irregularity of Irish Church life.² Twenty-eight of these indults empowered the favoured applicant to hold the benefice *in commendam*: that is, while drawing the income, to commit the actual cure of souls to some hireling. Here again, the Irish are in far greater proportion: 20 per cent. as against 5.8 English: there are no Welsh cases of this.

We must turn aside for a moment to note how all this bears upon a question to which I must come in my last volume—the Dissolution in England. One of the causes rehearsed in the preamble to that Act of Parliament in 1536 is "that a great multitude of the Religious Persons in such small houses do

¹ *Reg. Corbridge*, II, 73.

² In 1463 Pius II granted a *commendam* to the bishop of "the churches of Donn and Connor, which are united and are situated in Ireland, where dwell men untamed and half savage"—*ubi homines indomiti et quodammodo silvestres commorantur*—and, in consequence, his episcopal *mensa* is very meagre. In so far as we might suppose that Pius was at all personally concerned with this indult, it would gain force from the fact that he knew these islands fairly well (*C.P.L.* XII, 192).

rather choose to rove abroad in apostasy, than to conform themselves to the observation of good Religion"; and that this evil, like the others rehearsed, had rather increased than diminished in spite of the efforts of official visitors during the past 200 years. Such "roving abroad", such "regarding the cloister as a prison", to voice the complaint of contemporary disciplinarians, cannot but have been encouraged by this open sale at Rome of dispensations which contradicted both letter and spirit of the Rule. These were so many fresh bricks in that elaborate edifice of worldliness which was being built within the abbey precincts. No layman imagined that the monk who bought such an indult gave his money for the sake of saving parishioners' souls; therefore both purchaser and vendor, though each may have been otherwise as respectable as the average of his class, were conspiring together to raise the question: "Should these men be so richly endowed, in order that they may behave so little better than the average layman behaves?"

The last frequent instance of *proprietas* which needs notice here is that of testamentary reception or disposition. Charles de Lasteyrie rightly finds the root of this in those doles, at first so small and sporadic, which benefactors earmarked for the monks as an adjunct to their anniversary Mass and the frequently accompanying doles to the poor.¹ These became more frequent as time went on; and we find a notable step taken by even so zealous a reformer among the popes as Gregory X. In [1280] he granted to the monks of Münster the right to take any possessions, movable or immovable, which would have come to them if they had remained in the world. Calmet notes how this led naturally to the later abuse by which such heritages were kept as private property by the monks to whom they had fallen.² In 1293 a girl at Strassburg "left to the Dominican convent 10 marks; 20 to each student [friar], 100 to the prior of the convent and 100 to her own blood-brother; at which will the citizens were greatly perturbed". So writes the Dominican annalist himself, evidently recognizing the danger of the precedent.³

¹ École des Chartes, *Positions des thèses* (1899), p. 57.

² Calmet, *Münster*, p. 101.

³ *Ann. Colmar*, p. 160.

In 1366, Archbishop Islip of Canterbury made his monks residuary legatees,

so that it be employed for the needs of the brethren, in coin or otherwise, at the choice of the Chapter, to be distributed and divided by the hands of the chamberlain for the time being, so that each single monk may have this distribution yearly on the day of my anniversary, in order that, being thus rewarded, they may be able to pray more specially for my soul.¹

To these same monks, again, Bishop Edynton of Winchester left by will one mark each.² Half a mark, again, was bequeathed to every monk of Tynemouth by a benefactor in 1429.³ At St Albans, the mother-house of Tynemouth, the custom was by this time regular; no less than seven cases crop up casually.⁴ It constantly meets us in county histories: *e.g.* in Blomefield's *Norfolk* under Old Bukenham, N. Creake, Marham, Watlington, and Crabhouse. A specially significant legacy comes from John Morton of York, Esquire, in 1431. "*Item* I bequeath unto the abbot of Jervaulx 13s. 4d.: and to each monk of that abbey 2s. for his private purse"—*ad bursam suam propriam*.⁵ And, as we have seen bishops thus breaking the law, so even the Lady Margaret, Founder of Christ's and St John's Colleges at Cambridge, and celebrated as "the exactest pattern of the best devotion those days afforded", left by will in 1509 "to every monk [of Westminster] priest and there present [at my funeral], 2s.; to every monk being profest and no priest 12d.; to every monk being novice and not profest, 8d."⁶ It was about this same time that a monk of Westminster was able to pay £4, out of his father's legacy, for a private debt, and that the prior suspected him of having stolen it.⁷

Nor was any exception made for the friars, vowed to poverty with a still greater emphasis. The *Victoria County History* shows nine cases of money left to individual friars between 1392 (3s. 4d.

¹ Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, I, 60: "ut sic remunerati specialius pro anima mea valeant exorare."

² *Ibid.* p. 61.

³ Dugdale-Caley, III, 306.

⁴ *Trokelowe*, R.S. pp. 454-63.

⁵ *Test. Ebor.* Surtees Soc. II, 14.

⁶ *Collegium D. Johannis Evangelistae* (Cambridge, 1911), p. 106.

⁷ Westlake, *Last Days*, p. 74.

to 20s.) to 1524. To one friar, even £6. 13s. 4d. was bequeathed: to another, 5 marks and a silver spoon. In addition there were two cases of lump legacies to be divided equally between all the friars, and one 6s. 8d. to each master-friar.¹

When the Franciscan Berthold of Regensburg deplores the multitude of proprietary Religious, he does not seem to except his own Order [1250].² Less than a century later, Franciscan Alvarez Pelayo writes of his fellow-Franciscans at far greater length, and, as we shall presently see, with far more outspoken condemnation. Among the Carmelites, again, things had already gone so far in 1362, that the General Chapter decreed heavy penalties against any prior who should sell a life-pension to any friar, against the friar who bought it, and against any who should build a private chamber in the convent at his own expense or sell it to another. It was also forbidden to eat with secular folk in chambers or in the dormitory. At the same time, the General Chapter decided to punish as "proprietary" all friars who should "put out or lend to any persons outside the Order, or who should commend to their keeping either their own goods or those of the Order, giving them either for trade or for gain to secular folk".³

¹ *V.C.H. Yorks*, III, 290. Other cases in *Hist. MSS. Com. Report*, XI, App. iii, 232-3.

² *Predigten*, ed. Pfeiffer, I, 394 and II, 263.

³ *Mon. Hist. Carm.* pp. 179-80, 186. For further proofs of *proprietas* among friars see H. C. Lea, *Inquisition in M. Ages*, III, 174 n.; *Eiflia*, I, 607; *Kölner Dominikanerkloster*, p. 87.

CHAPTER XXIII

A CATENA OF COMPLAINTS

ALL this time, those who were seriously concerned for the purity of monastic discipline maintained an attitude which has not received fair recognition from historians. One respected modern writer treats the whole matter as a storm in a teacup; another is scandalized when he comes across the searching of monks' bedclothes; as if St Benedict had not specifically commanded this in his Rule. It is easy for us, at many centuries' distance, to ignore the full significance of *proprietas*; but contemporaries were under no illusion, with the exception of those whose own relaxations tempted them to what medieval theologians call *ignorantia affectata*.

From the strictly theological standpoint it was difficult or impossible to acquit these transgressors of mortal sin. This is clearly implied in St Gregory's action, and the appeal which two of his greatest successors had solemnly made to that precedent. Explicitly, again, the damnation of proprietary souls is repeatedly maintained by medieval disciplinarians. "Woe unto these proprietaries!" cried the Cistercian Caesarius of Heisterbach to his monastic audience, "who, for the sake even of a small thing, or of gaining a little freedom, lose so many and great rewards and earn eternal torments."¹ And, in another sermon to his brethren:

The monk who possesses a halfpenny is not worth a halfpenny. Abbot Nicholas of Hersenhusen had a brother in the flesh who was monk in the same house. One halfpenny was found about him at his death; so the abbot caused him to be buried outside the cemetery, and the halfpenny to be cast upon him, while all cried aloud "Thy money perish with thee!" When he was censured of cruelty for this deed, he answered: "If he is saved, or if he will be saved, this insult can do him no harm, but rather it may profit him. If he be damned, [burial in] the cemetery will profit him in naught, but will rather harm him. I have done this to strike terror into the rest: the vice of

¹ *Hom.* IV, 247.

proprietas separates the cloisterer from the communion of the righteous."¹

This doctrine, so far as I know, never found a serious public contradictor; the only question was (as we shall see), where did *proprietas* in the strict sense come in? Johann Busch in the fifteenth century, and Gui Jouenneaux in the sixteenth, speak as strongly as any of the earlier monastic reformers.² *Proprietas* is the root of all decay, wrote the fifteenth-century disciplinarians Jakob v. Jütenbogk³ and Dionysius Cartusianus⁴ and Johann Nider;⁵ and an orthodox modern student has called it "the capital vice" of monasticism.⁶

For it led almost inevitably to all kinds of other offences, sometimes directly, but more often as an indirect by-product of the demoralization always attendant upon plain violation of professed rules of conduct. Imbart de la Tour, in that learned history of his own Church which is more remarkable still for its fairness of outlook, confesses what a handle monastic *proprietas* gave to the Reformation.⁷ He writes:

The moment these colonies of evangelists became powerful, rich and privileged bodies; as soon as common life disappeared, and the collective funds split into individual portions—the abbot's income, the monks' table, the budgets of the different officers, the benefices—then they prepared their own decadence. It is impossible to lay too much emphasis on the incalculable consequences of this transformation.

In this he agrees with the verdict of Dom Berlière, the most learned modern Benedictine historian of his Order, when he comes to explain the causes of decay. "The root of the evil lay in private property, that *peculium* against which St Benedict had fought so energetically in his Rule, and upon which [Innocent III] made a frontal attack by depriving abbots of all right of dis-

¹ For the damnation of proprietaries see Mabillon, *Ann. Bened.* v, 92 (Council of London, 1075); *French Monasticism*, p. 8; Alvarus Pelagius, f. 210 b; Dion. Cartusianus, *Opera*, xxxviii, 223, 252 ("peccant non solum mortaliter sed mortalissime").

² Busch, *De Ref. Mon.* p. 259; *French Monasticism*, p. 16.

³ MS. 34 in Cath. Library at Trier, f. 78.

⁴ *Opp.* xxxviii, 237.

⁵ *De Ref. Rel.* p. 235.

⁶ Schmieder, p. 7: "das Hauptlaster".

⁷ *Origines de la réforme* (1909), II, 294.

pensation therefrom.”¹ Abbé Gatrio, again, when in his history of the abbey of Murbach he comes to that deed of 1335 by which the abbot contracted to give a definite allowance to each of the senior brethren, writes: “To this ill-omened contract the abbot-elect and the chapter appended their seals”: and from this he dates the decay of religious life there: it “caused indescribable harm...the nobly-born monks who had made it their home wished to live comfortably”.²

And these modern writers do but repeat what had long since been recognized by disciplinarians of the Middle Ages. Cardinal Hugh de St-Cher [1250], explaining how the devil rejoices in monastic decay, specifies “the greed and love of private property among Religious”.³ Abbot Gilles li Muisis of Tournai (1347), writing about those days when he had been one of the youngest monks in the abbey, and when this abuse was still in its earlier stages [1290], says:

Oftentimes many monks reported the state of the monastery to the bishop; and at his visitations they made certain suits against the abbot and other administrators; but in a short time they ceased from these attempts. And spiritual things began to be neglected, almsgiving began to be omitted, corrections to be winked at, and an excessive number of debts to be made, both at usury and otherwise; and they even came to this, that money was given for clothes and shoes. This thing was and is the greatest cause of the ruin of the monastery; for, before this, no monk dared to possess or carry money, save only the officials, and, from the time when money was given, all had an opportunity of private property, and this made them the more willing and ready to consent to sales [of conventual property].⁴

From one of Gilles’s contemporaries, who wrote before the Black Death, we have the fullest of the early diatribes against *proprietas*. This was Alvarez Pelayo, a Spanish suffragan-bishop and papal penitentiary, who wrote his *De Planctu Ecclesiae* in 1335. He was a Franciscan, in those days of bitter dispute in that Order between the strict and the relaxed brethren; and, like St Bonaventura and Pope Nicholas IV two generations earlier, and Clement V in his own time, he reprobated all serious re-

¹ *Revue bénédictine* (1920), p. 40.

² I, 436-8.

³ Commentary on Lamentations i, 7-8.

⁴ De Smet, II, 133.

laxations of the Rule. I give his evidence, as far as space permits, in his own words.¹ Some monks, he writes (f. 130 b):

keep such property as they have earned or otherwise received, without permission of their abbots.

Sometimes, again,

at the time of their conversion they do not fully renounce their possessions, but unfaithfully retain revenues, money-bags and other furniture, even as Ananias did with Sapphira his wife (f. 177 a).

Later, he discusses the subject in detail. He quotes from St Bernard:

There are some [Religious] who wish to be poor, but on condition that they shall lack nothing; they are in love with such poverty as suffereth no want.

Not only among monks, but even among us friars there are some, especially those in authority or the learned, who have heaps of books and clothes and furniture; they bear about not the scrip of Luke xxii, 35, but great chests and coffers. Their cells seem not poor cots and hovels and tabernacles, but rather the chambers and booths of merchants and the store-rooms and repositories of spicers, although Canon Law forbids repositories to Religious. Whatsoever precious stuff these men get, they lay up not in heaven, but where thieves break through and steal, and moths corrupt. The furniture of many Religious is more costly to carry about, when they change from place to place, than all the possessions that the man had before, while he was still in the world. Some evil Religious have as much money and coin as they can get; nay, some of them have it not only in one place, but they keep coffers and cupboards in divers places.

He then quotes from Cassian's *Collationes*:

What shall we wretches say to these things? we who, dwelling in convents, and under the care and solicitude of an abbot, carry about each his own private keys, and, treading the modesty and shame of our profession under foot, do not blush to wear in public signet-rings for sealing that which we have laid up? we to whom not only chests or baskets suffice not, but not even coffers and cupboards are enough to contain that which we amass, or which we kept to ourselves when we left the world? We, again, who are sometimes moved to wrath over the vilest and most unsubstantial things, which we so claim for our own that, if any man presume but to lay a finger upon one of

¹ Unless other pages are specifically mentioned, all these passages come from between f. 209 and f. 221 (lib. II, art. lxiv-lxviii). I have omitted his references to Canon Law and, in some cases, to the Bible.

them, we blaze up into such wrath against him that we cannot keep the commotion of our heart from showing itself upon our lips and in the whole indignation of our body.

But many lukewarm men among these Religious plead against this: they say: "we hold all these things, even these superfluities, by licence of our superiors". To them I answer that the superiors set over simple cloisterers, as apart from obedientiaries, cannot give them a dispensation to possess and use superfluities; for this is not to *dispense*, or to give a just licence, but rather to *dissipate*.... That superiors cannot in this matter give dispensation for their subjects in Religion to possess *peculium* or property was expressly decreed by the [Ecumenical Fourth] Lateran Council;¹ and especially in the case of money for the monk to spend at his own will; for in money is the essence of property even more than in other things.... Wherefore, although a superior may say to his subject in Religion: "From the money which is given unto thee, or which I give thee from the convent, go now and buy thyself a frock or tunic or shoes", or other necessities which for the moment he might lack, yet he may not say unto him: "I grant thee so many florins, or such a sum of money, to spend as it may please thee, or for thee to give to whomsoever thou wilt."... Therefore that is an abominable custom of certain monks and others who are mendicants, and a custom conducive to *proprietas*, that, when they should be clothed, their superiors give them certain moneys; or that these are bound to give them a certain yearly sum for clothes and shoes and other necessities, which they go and spend and give and lay up in store after their own will, and thus they become proprietary.... If then the superiors cannot dispense in these matters aforesaid, still less can they permit them to possess private rents or revenues, or the usufruct of land or vineyard or house or wood; for all such things go to the monastery when the man makes his profession.... If in these things the superiors cannot grant dispensation to their subjects, what are we to say of those pseudo-Religious who enter into those partnerships for [the rearing of] beasts with labouring husbandmen, which are called *società* in the vulgar tongue; or who also give their money to merchants for a share of their gains; who also make their farm-contracts for a share and for their iniquitous gains, and, although they live under the same roof as the rest, yet they share not the common life in refectory, and scarce in choir or in manual labour, but commonly each lives his life alone, or with one companion (or, if it be a nun, with another to bear her company) and not with the community? I say that such folk, in spite of all the *de facto* tolerance of their superiors, are violators of

¹ Here Alvarez gives reference to Innocent III's decree as embodied in Canon Law.

their vow in the sight of God and the Church's, and they are truly living in *proprietas*, and are wholly dead; for they are hypocrites, and it would have been better for them to have stayed in the world with their own goods than to have dwelt in the Order. . . . Such superiors grant dispensations in ignorance; for they are blind leaders of the blind. . . . They permit their subjects to have such things, or rather they wink at it. . . . If it be pleaded that almost all Religious live thus, with permitted private property, then I answer with Augustine; "They shall not burn [in hell] any the less because they burn with many others." . . . The *proprietas* of some such men is apparent; for these buy and sell and give by their own authority, and enter into other contracts which imply real ownership. For many of them collect books and furniture, in order that they may be able to sell them in times of sickness or of wandering about the world or other causeless reasons. Some even extort, rather than obtain, licence from their superiors to give to their kinsfolk, who are in no poverty, the goods and money which they have for use and for their own necessities. Some write books and sell them, and buy books and sell them at a dearer price, and others follow distracting occupations at their own will, so that they seem rather merchants and traders than Religious. For they make themselves proctors and advocates and defenders in courts outside the monastery, and stewards at lords' courts, against all laws. Moreover they lend money to each other; and some, at the universities and other extra-claustral habitations [*forestariis*] make unnecessary and unprofitable expenses—nay, superfluous and voluptuous—feasting each other and their superiors, and enjoying pittances of things bought with the money which they have in hand, and causing sumptuous books to be written, adorning and covering them with pearls and gold. They buy jewels, corals and knives with silver and ivory handles, and most precious paternosters of coral, which would suffice for queens, though Our Father hath little ear for such folk in their prayer; they buy soft and delicate garments, clothing themselves softly because they are royal. . . . They buy superfluous books and keep duplicates, wandering through the world with full purses and spending voluptuously in inns and taverns, building superfluous buildings superfluously adorned with most costly carvings and pictures, as though God were worshipped in gold and paintings and polished marbles. And (what is worse) some of them lavish dear-bought feasts and books and cloths and bare coin upon their superiors and others who can promote them unduly to offices, so that they often spend for no true necessity, but for feigned needs, that money which they claim to have received from their superiors, granted by them and at their command, against all laws and their own Rule, which grant them only those necessary expenses which I have enumerated above. . . . Moreover there are

certain Religious, feigning themselves to be physicians, in contradiction to Augustine's saying: "Ulcerous folk boast themselves as physicians." These know little or nothing of physic, though they have studied therein after a fashion for the sake of money gain and to gain favour with worldly folk: they deceive many and expose themselves to peril of irregularity;¹ through such gains they become proprietary, and it is in despite of law that they study in a science which is prohibited to them; whereby they incur excommunication. . . . Many Religious of our time are proprietary, in that they appropriate the use of things as if those things were their own property. . . . For they appropriate places to themselves, so that they will scarce suffer a brother from outside to be of their household unless he be very profitable to them. They desire always to dwell in their own places, so that we may properly say of them in those words of the Psalmist: *they have called their lands by their names*. They will not lend to their brethren those books and other things which they use not themselves, either as weighed down with age or infirmity, or because they have now no cause to study therein, or because they go elsewhere and leave their books and goods there under lock and key, or because they possess duplicates; and thus they are truly proprietary and are in mortal sin. . . . I have heard that, when a certain Religious besought another to lend him his needle, the other would not lend it except under pledge of the other's scissors; and, when by mischance that needle was broken, then this brother would not restore the scissors until he had received another needle. . . . Nay, (what is more abominable) sometimes it cometh to pass among evil Religious that, if a brother have certain good sermons, or a good commentary or other book of special profit or devotion, although he have no occasion at the time to study therein or to preach from it, yet, when his brother would fain (as indeed he should) either preach or read therein for his own edification, yet the other will not lend it, not only by reason of avarice but even for envy. . . . Moreover they are oftentimes in the lawcourts, litigating for money. . . . nay, those who have experience will testify that some Religious are stouter and more insolent litigators than layfolk. . . . Also, within the Order itself, one will sometimes go to law with another for the use of those things which they employ, thus turning *use* into *property*, as I have proved above. On this account they frequently provoke each other to injustice and hatred, which are born of greed. . . . They contend with their superiors, and persecute them and murmur against them: they conspire and cause obediences and precepts to be revoked by higher superiors or (what is worse) by lay-folk; and thus they will not suffer their superiors to interfere with their affairs, as though with their birthplaces.

¹ A cleric shedding blood became *irregularis*, even though it were in an operation which saved a life.

As to the friars (to whom Alvarez himself belongs), some of them are in more abundance than other Religious, because popular devotion is commonly turned more towards them and the people give them more, which is to them an occasion of transgression, since they turn all this to gain, whatever their holy and apostolic Rule may say. . . . Look into such men's cupboards and closets and books and frocks: their money-boxes and other furniture full to overflowing. . . . Some friars, all day long, sell the faggots from their woods, or the grain from the little plots which some have beside the gardens, or wine from certain vineyards and pergolas, garden-stuff from the garden, honey from the hives, fruit from the trees, pot-herbs from the garden. That bread which they have begged as alms they either exchange (and this is the same as to sell, being a contract which belongs to the actual owner) and other furniture which is given unto them;¹ this they may not do, for they ought not to receive anything in order to sell it, as their Declaration expressly says. . . . This plague and this manifest transgression of the Rule with regard to money hath grown as rank among Friars Minor as in other Orders: yet these do not offend so much: for there are some Franciscans (and let us hope that there be not many) on whose account money is held, even though they have no true necessity. And some evil Friars Minor, even though they have no true need, do not refuse money given to them: nay, they lay it up in their chests and spend it at their will as their own. Even among the Friars Minor (not to speak of other Orders) there are some who have no money because they can get none, because they find no man to give it, as conscience and experience plainly declare. . . . Also some Friars Minor have money-rents for a year or two years or more, bequeathed to them by their kinsfolk; or else they cause lords to give them yearly revenues even as stipendiary secular [clergy]. . . . Again, some friars, for whose necessities money has been deposited, make good cheer all day for the brethren's "gaudy"² or for their superiors or for others their special friends, friars and seculars. Moreover, some superiors compel some friars to make such feasts, all of which is cozenage and contrary to their profession.

This last probably alludes to university degree-feasts and similar occasions: for he goes on presently to very explicit complaints on that score.

For in very truth some friars of to-day who go to Paris especially, but also elsewhere [to study], by grace and licence and not in any

¹ It will be seen that Alvarez's zeal gets the better of his grammar here. This "Declaration" to which he frequently appeals is the bull *Exivi de Paradiso* of Clement V (1312), for which see Lea, *Hist. Inquis. M. Ages* III, 60.

² *Tota die faciunt plectanciam. . . bonitati fratrum*

proper sense by command, go not for the sake of study and of becoming profitable to others, but to gain pre-eminence, and to infect the Order and the brethren with their own partialities and divisions and honours and pomps and indiscipline. For in truth some professors and lectors are the prime and principal transgressors of the Rule and destroyers of the Order. St Francis, their lawgiver, gave them an evangelical law, and none of them keepeth that law to the letter. In word, they preach both laws of the Rule, the old and the new; yet in their life they fight against it. All day long they dispute, all day they compose syllogisms, and all day they throng the guest-houses and hostelries; they empty repeated goblets and then belch forth their carnal intelligence. In their Chapters they cite the Rule and extol it as beatific; yet they will not touch it with one of their fingers. Such men are true successors and heirs of the Scribes and Pharisees, for they have inherited their vices. With what conscience, then, do these wretches, especially those who go to Paris by grace, pay money for their expenses, and other brethren who are established there¹ receive so great a sum of money, to wit, thirty florins a year? men whose parents in the world scarce ever possessed a single florin, and could scarce fill their belly with millet-bread. I do not see; nor can any man see whose eye is single and clear; yet I do see that this is expressly contrary to the aforesaid Rule and Declarations. Some, moreover, when they are at the university, are not content with the common livelihood of the brethren, but some frequently cause daily purchase of food and drink; they exchange pittances and enter into gluttonous partnerships; they buy delicate garments, with books of great price and truly superfluous; they buy and pay for the writing of many unnecessary books; they lend money to each other and frequently buy books from secular folk and sell again.

And twice, on later pages, he exposes the hypocrisy of a system whereby friars resigned their keys to the superior "with the tacit understanding that he should remove nothing from their cell or from their dish", and a sick brother might "expropriate himself with the intention of getting his *peculium* back again if he should recover."²

¹ *Fratres stabularii*: it seems scarcely possible to give *stabularius* here its usual sense of *stable-boy, groom*.

² This is abundantly borne out by other disciplinarians' complaints. Here, for instance, are the words of an experienced and level-headed papal commissioner for reform: Martin, abbot of the Schottenkloster in Vienna. He and his fellows visited the 52 Benedictine houses of Austria in [1450]. Concerning one monastery, that of St Paul, he writes: "I praise the brethren above all others of unreformed monasteries in this particular, that they

In another passage Alvarez brings an even more terrible indictment against his fellow-friars and their imitators under the cloak of Religion.¹ The Church, he says, has approved the injunction of manual labour in all monastic Rules:

but alas, alas! holy alms, and the holy bread of angels, begged and collected from door to door in God's name, fatten nowadays a hundred thousand and a thousand thousand rascals [*ribaldorum*] who, being full-fed with bread and given up to idleness, fall (as Ezekiel deplores in his 16th chapter) into the iniquity of the men of Sodom, who were slothful and gluttonous and fell therefore into that unspeakable sin. For many, under cloak of Religion, visiting other folk and flattering them and feigning lies, eat the bread of impiety and drink the wine of iniquity... And would that such idle pseudo-Religious, as a lesser evil, begged and received necessary bread! But in fact they beg for the superfluous; and thus, like traders and thieves, they exchange and sell the remainder for the sake of their gluttony and wine-bibbing. They change the holy bread, conferred upon them for the love of God, for other profane things, for which they give the bread of alms; nay, thus committing base fraud,² for the bread of alms is not given to be sold but that a poor man may be fed thereon; wherefore it is written in Ecclesiasticus xxxiv [21] *The bread of the needy is their life: he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood*... O holy Church, mother of the true poor, in these days all that gather money are commonly robbers; nowadays we cannot find one in a thousand, I say not among secular folk but even among Religious, who refuseth offerings: nay, who doth not make for himself a hoard from the alms [which he collects]!³

Most scathing of all is his denunciation of the subterfuges by which some friars avoided the prohibition to touch money (f. 215 b):

When they have not a servant at hand to receive the money-alms given unto them, then they bid the giver put it on a window-ledge

accepted reform not only in word but in deed. They made devout confessions, and in detestation of their past life they resigned their property in our presence; one 30 florins, another more and another less... In other places I fear that the abandonment of property was merely in word; for we saw no effect, but they denied the possession of anything. But the nuns at Gözz presented their coral rosaries and rings: only we saw no florins" (H. Pez, *Scriptt. Rer. Aust.* (1743), II, 641-2).

¹ *De Planctu Ecclesiae*, f. 169 a. The reference is to Ezekiel xvi, 49: "This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness."

² Reading *sic* for *se*, which seems to make no sense here.

³ *De Planctu Ecclesiae*, f. 169.

or in some other place, and afterwards they cause it to be fetched from thence, which is expressly contradictory to the tenor of the Declaration [of their Rule]... They receive money-offerings at their altars... They carry the keys of cellars and money-closets and money-boxes wherein the coin is stored. Again, they touch the money either with wax [at the tip of their fingers] or with a stick or with a straw. Some of them even carry money sewn up in their frocks and tunics; others, again, cause money to be put into their hoods; and thus such friars do touch money, against the aforesaid Declaration.

Alvarez, it will be seen, insists on *proprietas* as a mortal enemy to all the "Three Substantials" of the monastic vow—Poverty, Obedience, and Chastity. In this he says no more than almost every disciplinarian who touches upon the subject. The Dominican Johann Nider, one of the most zealous among monastic reformers, specifies the six changes which, in his opinion, are essential to any true and lasting amendment. The first is, that a beginning should be made with the most promising abbeys: let us first put these straight, and we can go on gradually to attack the more undisciplined houses: since we cannot choose the ideal course of reforming all, let us choose the second best, and get some reformed. The second essential is to stamp out *proprietas*: only thus can we ensure the integrity of the Three Substantial Vows.

For, wheresoever the pure community of goods is not kept, we can scarcely hope for the success of reform. If we can arrive at that community of goods, then almost all avenues of vice can be blocked; but, if we leave the brethren their property (or, as they call it, their appropriated and personal effects) then the blocking of almost any avenue of vice becomes directly impossible. For no man can wanton in pride of apparel when the chamberlain gives him no garments but such as the Rule prescribes; covetousness can scarce find a place when the money that feeds it has been withdrawn; there is no access to women or carnal lapses when no coin is given to buy it; the refectory fare, when there is no way of procuring a more delicate, removes all occasion of feasting and drunkenness; moreover those wanderings beyond the precincts, wherefrom many evils may follow, are easily restrained; for no man can allege any reason for asking leave when all that he needs is freely bestowed on him within the monastery. On the other hand, when property is permitted, and when each has his own, scarce any observance of the Rule can be observed, except in mere show.¹

¹ *De Ref. Rel.* p. 259.

Nider's contemporary, prior Peter v. Rosenhaim of Melk (1432), gives exactly similar evidence in a sermon addressed to fellow-Benedictines.

Proprietas ministers the means of making feasts both in and without the monastery, and sometimes drunkenness and surfeit are incurred, the fast is broken, silence is violated, and all claustral discipline is dissolved; then games follow, and after play contentions of the brethren, blasphemies, blows, curses, perjuries, thefts and so forth. Moreover it affordeth the means of paying and attracting folk at our own pleasure, to the peril of chastity. And thus monks violate their holy vows even in the third essential, which is continence.... But alas! what do we see in our times and what are the evils of our day! ... There are four beasts that devour, eat down and uproot this vine of holy Religion.... The first is the pride of the prelates.... They strive rather to prominence than for the profit [of the house].... They erect a stiff neck and think themselves lords of the Church revenues, and not men who have undertaken the care of poor brethren, to whose necessities they must minister rather than compel them into the vice of *proprietas*. "Wherefore all this pother?" say these prelates; "must we provide for the brethren in common? Must we busy ourselves all day long with each separate [brother]? Let each have his portion in money: let each buy what he pleases, and the prelate will be left in peace, and each in his own lodging shall enjoy whatsoever he will." Of such folk writeth Esdras (1, ix, 2) *And the hand of the princes and magistrates hath been first in this transgression*.

Peter concludes with an apology for having spoken so freely "concerning the debasement of holy Religion" before this congregation of monastic dignitaries. He consoles himself with the reflection that "now, by God's grace, our Order hath begun to rise a little [*paulisper*] from its fallen state".¹

These are just two specimens of the earnestness with which disciplinarians emphasize especially this danger to the substantial vow of chastity.² Gerhoh, prior of Reichersberg [1150], is indignant at the prevalence of *proprietas* in nunneries; the women have their separate tables and their separate dresses: "this abuse is sadly prevalent in women's convents, whence we have a total defect of apostolic community-life".

¹ B. Pez, *Bib. Ascet.* II, 88.

² E.g. Jouenneaux (*French Monasticism*, p. 18); Alvarus Pelagius, 177 a; v. d. Hardt, III, 162. For its general evil consequences, see *ibid.* pp. 146, 157, 163-4, and Dion. Cart. *De Ref. Claustralium*, art. xiii: "manifold unprofitableness and ruin is bred in monasteries by *peculium*".

Let the bishop therefore “dig a way through the wall” [Ezekiel xii, 5], forbidding to the nuns all precious garments, which are not distributed from the common vestiary of the convent, but which each nun receiveth from all different sources, and whereunto she clings with unlawful and nefarious boldness: to say nothing of those which they receive from their lovers and which their male friends [*amici*] give privately.¹

Again, out of the thirteen wicked Carthusian monks whom Petrus Dorlandus holds up as awful examples in his *Chronicle*, seven were proprietary, and were thus led on to further sin. He repeatedly emphasizes the contingent moral dangers of this breach of the Rule, and describes how, in one abbey, this one root proved “the germ of all evils” and “introduced innumerable vices”—“gluttonous feasts and quarrels and fornication”.² Those who neglect the vow of poverty, writes St Catharine of Siena (1378), fall into disobedience, and thence gradually, through worldly friendships, into incontinence.³ And again, in her warning letter to the abbess of St Pietro in Monticelli, “Ye should have all things in common; the great nun should have as much as the little, and the little as much as the great; otherwise, the nun cometh to such default that she will fall into incontinence, whether in mind or in deed.”⁴ The Dominican Johann Nider (1430) bears similar testimony. There are monasteries (he writes) in which all the monks are proprietary, each living on his own income; so that even the good among the brethren are compelled, “like worldly folk, to provide all temporal things for themselves. I say nothing of bodily incontinence, and disobedience of soul, without which it is hard to live [*vix vivitur*] in such monasteries.”⁵ Dionysius Cartusienis [1450], quoting with approval from the chancellor of Cologne University, gives a terrible list of the transgressions which follow from *proprietas*, ending with “guzzlings and wine-bibbings, from whence they slip into fleshly vices, and break most criminally their vow of chastity”. “Monks who possess a *peculium* often make more immoderate use of this than laymen and married folk make of

¹ P.L. cxciv, cols. 1279–80.

² *Chron. Cartusiense*, pp. 336, 468, 481.

³ *Dialogo* (ed. Gigli), 303, c. 159.

⁴ *Lettere* (ed. Tommaseo), II, 88.

⁵ *Formicarius*, p. 26 (lib. I, c. iii). Elsewhere he again affirms the intimate connexion of *proprietas* with incontinence, *De Ref. Rel.* pp. 62, 259.

their own property." The Carthusians owe their healthy condition to their strict prohibition of *proprietas*, "whereas other Orders, so far as numberless houses are concerned, have decayed through *peculium* and do decay more and more from day to day, both in spiritual and in temporal things, as lamentable experience teaches us."¹ Again in his Dialogue between a nun and her director,

"I have learned by experience", confesses the nun, "what vices grow out of private property. For such nuns care little or naught for obedience; they are prone to anger, pride, rebellion, partiality, feasting and drinking [*comessationes, potationes*], gossiping and play. Moreover they are weary of good, hard-hearted, bold, full of worldly affections and curiosity and various distractions of mind. Rarely are they free from wrath and envy and evil concupiscence; and they perform their church services negligently, hastily and corruptly."

And, in the next section, Dionysius goes on to rebuke

the madness of many nuns of our day, who go about in curious and costly garments, so close-fitting and so pleated that they can scarce be distinguished from secular ladies and girls, except perhaps by a curious and gauze-like veil or by a scanty scapular. . . . Are not such nuns daughters of Babylon and of devils, who seek to please the lovers of this world and to challenge men's looks to themselves; who even wander thus forth from their cloisters, and kindle more lust in the beholders than secular girls and ladies do?²

Moreover, what these writers tell us by way of generalization we may find in concrete detail among the records. It was in the sacristan's private lodgings at St Edmundsbury that Samson had witnessed those "unmentionable things" [*tacenda*] which drove him to level the buildings with the ground; it was from the cellarer's rooms at Norwich that similar irregularities were reported to the episcopal visitors; and we have seen how at St Peter's, Ipswich, there was but one step from the possession of a private hoard to "lending money to women and other folk".³ The four unchaste and scandalous monks whom Bishop Stafford found at St German's priory in 1400 were all proprietary, and it was partly through their purse that he smote them. Besides public penance, and condemnation to sleep henceforth in the

¹ *Opera*, xxxviii, 236-7.

² *De Ref. Mon.* art. viii (*Opera*, xxxviii, 257).

³ *E.H.R.* 1932, p. 271.

common dormitory (from which, of course, they had no business ever to have absented themselves), they were fined from their clothes-money for the fabric fund, in sums varying from 3s. 4d. to 6s. 8d.¹ Concerning many other abbeys where the proprietary system thus came to stay, we may write more or less exactly in the words of the historian of St Martin at Autun: it is a continuous story of "quarrels for secular jurisdiction, quarrels over prerogatives with the Bishop of Autun, quarrels with the serfs who clamoured for emancipation, quarrels with the monks who were constantly demanding an increase of their prebends... the material losses of the abbey kept pace with its moral losses."² When stress is laid upon the bad characters and unfair methods to be found among Henry VIII's visitors, it must not be forgotten that their contemporaries were prepared to find their report, if not *vero* in detail, *ben trovato* in substance. It may be that the so-called "Black Book" never existed, but was simply hinted at in order to persuade Parliament into ratification of the Suppression. But the alleged substance of that book was simply a partisan expression of warnings which had passed unheeded, for centuries, from the lips of some of the best churchmen in Europe. Sir Thomas More himself, in his anti-reforming treatise, tells three anecdotes against the monks which, coming from the pen of a modern writer, would have been ascribed to anticlerical bigotry.³

¹ *Reg. Stafford*, p. 314. For the brief life-history of a proprietary monk, see *V.C.H. London*, I, 462 (Cistercian, 1401). The individual instances of proprietary monks which I have noted are far too numerous to print here. But it may be worth while to cite those from Dugdale-Caley alone, not as an exhaustive list even from those volumes, but as giving a rough idea of the frequency of the phenomenon: vol. I, p. 157; vol. II, pp. 8, 32 cf. 33, 39 cf. 40, 62 cf. 63, 221 cf. 202, 222, 255, 304 cf. 307, 337, 338, 340, 430, 437, 452, 473 cf. 474, 477; vol. III, pp. 53, 166, 183, 188, 207, 291, 293, 296, 306, 352, 359; vol. IV, pp. 91, 194, 451 cf. 452, 458, 465, 551, 624, 662, 663; vol. V, p. 667.

² Bulliot, p. 275 (A.D. 1326 ff.).

³ *English Works*, pp. 154 (really 134) and 194.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE PLEA OF DISPENSATION

PROPRIETAS, therefore, was to medieval disciplinarians the Blatant Beast, and, with Innocent III at their head, they assailed it again and again in frontal attack. If, in the long run, very few monastic corpses went to enrich the convent dunghill, while the overwhelming majority reposed among the bodies of the just, this was not for want of plain and frequent reminders. The subject constantly occupied the attention of Councils and Synods;¹ and, if such formal decrees become less frequent in the fifteenth century, this was not because the thing itself was dying out; for the complaints of disciplinarians became increasingly frequent and emphatic.

The Ecumenical Council of Bâle, in § 34 of its *Bull for Monastic Reform*, forbade the ministering of money for food, drink, or clothing "notwithstanding any constitution or ordination whatsoever [to the contrary]"; let us maintain (it continues) the constitution of Benedict XII.² Almost at the same time (1435) the Synod of Strassburg, recalling Innocent III's decision that not even a pope could license *proprietas*, commanded all heads of houses within the diocese, whether male or female, "within a month from the publication of this present decree, to take away from their subjects all the annual revenues which they possess; otherwise, if such superiors dissemble this, we will deprive them of their dignities and put others in their places who are willing and able to extirpate this vice of private property."³ We find also sporadic battles against the system in different dioceses or monasteries. William Wells, Abbot of York and Bishop of Rochester from 1436 onwards, tried hard to enforce the ancient discipline:

For a monk to retain to his separate use any worldly goods was, in his opinion, a species of idolatry; and, therefore, when he visited his

¹ See, for instance, L. Richard's *Analysis Conciliorum*, II, 42, 58, 119, 126, 132, 139, 143, 184, 187, 199, 203, 206, 207, 217, 223, 227, 228, 231, 244, 283, 287, 296, 311; also Wilkins, I, 502, 592, 672; and Pantin, I, 10, 12, 18, 38, 39, 41, 51, 77, 80-1, 84, 106-7, 203, 233-4, 236, 241, 246, 256.

² Tritheim, *Opera Pia*, p. 1023.

³ Martène, *Thes.* IV, 548.

priory, in order to deter the members of it from being again guilty of so heinous a crime, he enjoined that whosoever should be found, in his last moments, possessed of any personal property, should be denied the privilege of burial among his brethren, and not be entitled to their oblations or their prayers.¹

The legatine visitors at St Emmeram of Regensburg, in 1452, attempted to restore the literal rule with regard not only to flesh, but also to property. "Let not any monk presume to say, of anything granted to him, *This is mine*; for he must call it *ours*." Otherwise he is guilty of "this most wicked vice".² The prior of Christ Church, Canterbury (1443) sent a formal summons to one of his obedientiaries, "under pain of the greater excommunication, to reveal and exhibit within your chamber in our dormitory [at an early date] all your money, whether in gold or silver, and all other goods whatsoever, books or monastic goods in your possession or deposited in other men's keeping without Our authority, or alienated to any man."³ Murbach, which had once been one of the greatest abbeys in Germany, sank so low that the abbot was compelled to turn for help to the reforming cardinal-legate Bessarion in 1460. He pleaded financial ruin: "we have only three or four monks now in the abbey, since we receive none but nobles, and nobles are not always to be found" in these days of reduced prebends. Moreover, even these three or four lived not in community, but in their private lodgings. But Bessarion could gain no permanent victory; in 1496 they were still in private lodgings, often shirking their choir duties, and still confined to the nobility.⁴

The most instructive evidence of all comes from the Premonstratensians, for here we see not only one monastery but the whole Order, which had been in the forefront of the great monastic revival of the twelfth century. In 1449, after the disasters of the Hundred Years' War, a great reforming abbot was elected at Prémontré, the head of the Premonstratensian Order. With the support of Nicholas V he resisted the encroach-

¹ Dugdale-Caley, I, 157 a.

² Cod. Monacensis, No. 14196, f. 157 a.

³ *Lit. Cant.* III, 176.

⁴ Gatrio, II, 26. One of the results of the *commendam* system was that it rendered the vice of private property ineradicable; at Pontoise, for instance, the monks had each 50 *sols per diem* for food, in addition to regular commons of corn, wine and peas (Depoin, p. 117).

ments of great folk upon his abbey properties, and restored its whole finances.

"This reform", writes the sympathetic historian of the abbey,¹ "was indebted to him for one characteristic beyond those demanded by the warning brief of Eugenius IV [in 1438]; it raised barriers against the invasion of a new vice, strongly repugnant to the primitive spirit of the Premonstratensian Order, viz. the greedy feeling of *appropriation*. The Rule of St Norbert [its founder], so austere and pure in its origins, had already been compelled to submit to several concessions: suppression of the continual fast, relaxation of abstinence, flesh-eating made easy and even sometimes illegally tolerated, more extensive relations with outside folk, not without risk of occasional scandals. The disorders of the time must have aggravated these dangers; but that was not all; community-life had become a burden to many of the Religious; they were tending towards the liberty of secular life; and, to reach that goal, they aimed at private property. The luxurious lives of the abbots *in commendam* and even of certain regular abbots, their dislike for community dwellings and community food, their disdain for the garments common to all the Order had gone still further to exaggerate the strivings of the majority towards comfort. Consequently, at the Chapter General held at St-Foillan in 1451, it was decreed, under threat of canonical penalties, even to excommunication and prison, '(1) That none possess any property, real or personal, and all such possessors must give them to their superiors for the common stock, (2) That none possess money or private *peculium*, (3) That none possess for his own anything whatsoever, not even notebook, writing-tablet or stylus, etc., etc. The penalties for violation are to be first, deprivation of Holy Communion; then, imprisonment until the Rule be satisfied; then, in case of final impenitence, the loss of community-prayers and burial in the dunghill. Reasonable exception must be made for the officers who go outside the monastery in support of the interest of the Order. Any abbot who shows tolerance in such matters is liable to deposition. Each abbot must make and prescribe frequent search in the cells, and forbid the possession of locked chests and boxes. In order to remove all pretexts for recrimination or disobedience, abbots must be careful to provide for the livelihood, the dress, the shoes, and all other needs of each brother.' This decree met with much opposition in the monasteries whose abbots had not helped to draw it up. In many places the visitors despatched to ensure its execution were repulsed or heard with disdain; though the measure was energetically conceived and bravely supported, it might easily fail in the face of passive resistance. The abbot had recourse to Nicholas V and procured from

¹ Taiée, p. 138.

him an energetic bull (1454) which commanded all abbots, superiors and brethren to receive the visitors and submit completely to their authority, under pain of excommunication and other canonical penalties."

The bull ran as follows:

We have heard that, contrary to the edifying traditions of your Order, some members of the same at this day, urged by the Spirit of Evil, and treading under foot the modesty of their profession, are leading an dishonest and dissolute life, and, imbued with other vices, resist not only the visitors sent by the Abbot and Chapter General, but also their own abbots, who have ever been authorized to visit, correct, make enquiry, and punish; moreover, not content with despising their warnings and reforms, these brethren have recourse sometimes to the power of layfolk for plunging deeper into disorder: they resist the visitors by force of arms, deliver the goods of the Order to those layfolk who defend their cause, and daily cause many other scandals, to the grievous detriment of discipline, to the dishonour of God, and to the scandal of the multitude.

"This bull", adds Taiée, "put an end to the internal disorders of the community"; but his own history belies this optimistic conclusion in its later pages. The reforming abbot died four years later; his immediate successor quarrelled with his subjects and wasted the revenues of the Order, refusing to render accounts for audit. In 1498, the irregularities in the Order were so great that Louis XII was obliged to intervene with his lay authority. He enumerated

the [four] most important points whereon these Religious mostly go astray. Clausturation is not properly kept; the "great deformity" is in the matter of chastity; they eat flesh against the Rule, and "let all things be in common; let the brethren give up all money acquired by their industry or in other ways: let abbots render business accounts, and let dilapidators [of the revenues] be punished."¹

For in fact it was a labour of the Danaids; the vessel was now cracked, and it leaked faster than it was supplied. As early as 1300, at Worcester, "the chapter came to a common resolution that the infirmarer should provide each monk with 18*d.* on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, in order that each should buy himself such spices as they know to be suitable to

¹ Taiée, p. 171.

their own bodily complexions".¹ Thus spice-money came in where clothes-money might be forbidden. So, in 1338, when the Benedictine General Chapter promulgated Benedict XII's fresh and severe prohibition of money payments, they took upon themselves to modify it: "yet by courtesy, and for spice-money and other small necessities, which it is not convenient that monks should lack, it is permitted that money be both received and given".² It mattered nothing that Benedict's own decree had attempted to meet similar quibbling pretexts by which the Rule had been evaded.³ At Abingdon, in 1418, the chamberlain gave as "spice-money" £53. 15s. to a congregation of thirty-five monks: that is, more than the average yearly income of two country squires. The portions ranged from the abbot's £5. 15s. (equal to the whole yearly income of some country vicars) to the ordinary monk's £1. 10s. if priest, £1. 2s. if non-priest. Exactly the same rate held good for the only other surviving roll (1429). In addition to this money he gave actual "spices", and so did at least one other obedientiary, the sacristan.⁴ It is very difficult to calculate the full amount of pocket-money which, under one excuse or another, was given at great monasteries. At Ely, for instance, one entry in Arundel's register (1401) would seem to imply that each monk had received only £1. 5s. 6d. a year for clothes-money and pension, *plus* certain payments made "under the name of 'graces', at accustomed times".⁵ But these unspecified "graces" must have amounted to a good deal, if we are to take seriously the "Ordinations" made by the prior and convent in 1314, dealing with books and plate at a time when a Bible might easily cost a priest's whole yearly income, and silver plate was a very costly luxury. One clause runs:

If any brother has perchance lost or mislaid any volume so that it cannot be found, the price of this volume shall be subtracted from his *graciae* and garments until satisfaction be made for the same or a similar volume.

¹ *Anglia Sacra*, I, 525. Spices, *species*, included in the Middle Ages sweetmeats and dried fruits such as figs or dates.

² Pantin, II, 11.

³ Snape, p. 162. For refutation of similar quibbles see Dion. Cartusiensis, xxxviii, 428 b, 433 a, b, 436 a; and Charrière, pp. 273-5, 281, 714.

⁴ Kirk, pp. 62, 86, 105.

⁵ *Reg. Arundel*, ff. 493 ff.

Again,

neither the refectorer himself, nor any other of the convent, nor any other man in the name of the convent, shall give, lend, grant in exchange, sell, pawn or in any other way assign, alienate, or permit to be alienated, to the damage of the monastery or the community, either silver vessels or spoons or mazer-bowls. If any man shall contravene any of these prohibitions, then let the prior or subprior subtract forthwith [the cost] from the *graciae* and garments due unto him, and deliver it to the refectorer for the purchase of an equivalent.¹

Mr Snape gives other figures (p. 165):

At Durham in 1409 the secretary alone distributed £24. 9s. among 31 monks, and other obediendaries also gave sums: at Worcester in 1521-2, £32. 17s. was distributed from the chamberlain's office alone among 38 monks. From 1468 each monk of Westminster contributed a mark yearly to the building of the nave, which with a "recreation" or harvest-outing which they also denied themselves, added from £33 to £36 a year to the building fund.²

At Tewkesbury, in 1351, the monks had pensions of £1. 7s. each, which, at that time, may be roughly compared with £40 to-day.³ Nor were the advocates of relaxation always content with mere legal fictions; in one case, at least, they descended to falsification of St Benedict's Rule by a glaring mistranslation.⁴ Bromyard tells us how such men console themselves against the threatened penalties of the next world as to feel no serious fear: "for, as many faults as they have, so many cloaks they have for their faults, after the devil's fashion [who calls vices by pretty names]. For those among the Religious who are infected with the vice of *proprietas* excuse themselves, and falsely cloak it under the name of prudence against the danger of want to come."⁵ St Antonino (1450) confessed that "modern Religious" do in fact commit great abuses in evasion of the Rule against private property.⁶ Jouenneaux, a couple of generations later, found one of the main obstacles to reform in "the writings of certain persons . . . who have taught their tongues to speak lies; men who

¹ B. Mus. MS. Add. 41612, f. 31 a.

² Rackham, *Nave of Westminster*, pp. 32-3.

³ Bristol and Gloucs. Arch. Soc. (1933), LV, 255.

⁴ V. d. Hardt, III, 137-8.

⁵ *Sum. Praed.* R, v, 65, with cross-reference to F, I, 30.

⁶ *Summa*, pars III, tit. xvi, c. 1, § 11 (vol. III, col. 869 a).

are ingenious against righteousness, learned in the cause of falsehood." His bugbear is the adversary who is cunning "to patch up incongruous texts whereby he may prove to dull wits either that these frequent transgressions are no sin at all, or at least that they are scarcely sinful".¹

One excellent example of such palliations is printed among the documents concerning the Ecumenical Council of Constance (1415-18). First, we have a plea of several pages put in by an advocate of the relaxed party: then the plea of the stricter party, and finally one which tries to hold the balance. The author of this "Moderate Decision (*Decisio Media*)" represents one side as insisting that clothes-money leads logically, and often in practice, to separate food allowances, and private cells, both of which are distinctly forbidden in Canon Law. Thence the further descent is inevitable.

Experience, which is our mistress in practical affairs, teaches that Religious of this kind, of either sex, are often unquiet, disobedient, unwilling to be reformed or to lay these annual pensions into the common stock even at their superior's bidding: and thus they are proprietary; and others are gamblers and fornicators, wine-bibbers and drunkards, dressed in sumptuous raiment. Thus, where other monks suffer hunger and thirst, these are drunken; they keep neither poverty nor obedience, nor do they even hold a common table. See therefore how perilous is the state of the superiors of such Religious, who know that this is done among their subjects, and hold their peace and reprove not. Behold, all the souls of such subjects shall be required at the hands of those who are set over them, whether in the cloister or in the province... And thus they scandalize the Church, and especially the laity, whom they stir up against the clergy. Woe unto him through whom scandals come or are made.

And, a few columns further, meeting the plea that the pension-system is a sensible practical compromise for the common good, the author writes:

Yet the common good rarely comes out in these dispensations, but only private good, as we see in effect that each seeks his own private profit. Experience, mistress of practical affairs, shows that this kind of private life begets many abuses; and monks of this sort who live their own private life possess gold and silver, to which all things obey. They visit neither refectory nor dormitory, they possess a variety of

¹ *French Monasticism*, pp. 14, 18.

furniture, precious garments and beds, menservants and maidservants, concubines, horses and hunting-hounds, providing themselves better cheer [than the rest] in corners apart, or even in the refectory, with many other abuses. Who now can doubt in this matter that the superior who grants dispensations to such young monks, and they who receive the dispensations, are in a state of damnation, and that the dispensation of any pope whatsoever, and of any superiors of any sort, whether singly or in general concert, can in no wise save them?

Thus argues the strong opponent of the pension system: and here are the words in which the moderator sums up on that point.

First Conclusion. Many evils follow upon this kind of life among Religious, with many disorders and abuses and scandals, whereby the layfolk rise up against the Religious and speak evil of them. This conclusion is evident from experience, which is our mistress in practical affairs, and from the reasons before rehearsed.

He concludes that pensions should be given only rarely and with great reserve; wholesale dispensations should more truly be called *dissipations*, and the abuse of the system puts men in peril of damnation, from the pope, or general minister or provincial minister who grants it down to the simple monk or friar who profits by it.¹

The main quibbles, as will already have been noted, concerned the abbot's dispensing power. If money or goods were held without the abbot's permission, there was *proprietas*; but how far could such permission really exempt the monk from his vow of poverty? The strict party were, of course, tempted to exaggeration on their side; but here was nothing comparable to the opposite exaggeration which would practically have given abbots power to annul that whole chapter of the Rule, and to do what no pope could. St Antonino writes:

A superior cannot give to a Religious a dispensation to possess anything of his own; namely, to possess anything definitely at his own disposal, that he may do what he will therewith, of his own authority, without his superior's will; nay, even (as Innocent [III] saith [in the Decretals]) not even the pope can give an indulgence, that is a dispensation, in this case—

¹ V. d. Hardt, III, 146-64. For a rehearsal and rebuttal of similar pleas on the part of the relaxed majority, see Dionysius Cartusianus, *De Reformatione Claustralium*, art. ix-xviii.

except, in extreme cases, by unfrocking the monk and making a layman of him, just as some lawyers grant the pope power of unfrocking him and allowing him to marry.¹ This subtle exception was repudiated by St Thomas Aquinas; but it seems to have been allowed at least by the great majority of canon lawyers. Antonius de Rosellis [1450] has an illuminating chapter on this subject.² Can a pope (for instance) make a monk into a non-monk in order that he may become king and marry, where a king and an heir are needed? "I find that the blessed Thomas thinks he cannot, contrary to the opinion of all canonists: let us see therefore which opinion seems the more sound": Thomas had "derided" Joannes Andreae, and the *Speculum Doctrinale* attributed to Vincent of Beauvais, for holding the positive doctrine: yet Antonius is on their side:

since the pope, who is in God's place upon earth, seems able to make a thing sacred into a thing non-sacred and profane; for the prince and pope can take away the substance of a thing and attribute a new substance to it; therefore it is said that he can make something out of nothing. . . whence it is inferred that, although it may be that the pope cannot make of a monk, while he is still a monk, that he should contract matrimony, yet by making him, for a reason, not a monk but a king, he may permit him to contract matrimony and possess property of his own, as Joannes Andreae and Vincent hold.

The pope, then, God upon Earth, can help an individual monk, if he sees sufficient cause, out of *proprietas* and the rest of his vow at one heroic stroke. But how can any such power be allowed to the abbot or prior, to whom the monk must look in 999,999 cases out of a million? Innocent III's words would seem precise enough: "Let not the abbot suppose that he may dispense with a monk in this matter of possessing property: for the abdication of property, like as the keeping of chastity, is so annexed to the monastic Rule that not even the Supreme Pontiff can grant an indulgent licence." Yet (as the English canonist John of Ayton put it [in 1330]) "few [Religious] are to be found who are wholly without that vice" of *proprietas*, and therefore we must compromise: "it is better to have blear-eyed

¹ *Summa*, pars III, tit. xvi, c. 1, § 11 (vol. III, col. 867 b).

² Goldast, *Monarchia*, I, 477. In my translations I omit the references to different chapters of Canon Law or to commentators.

monks than wholly blind.”¹ His more famous successor Lyndwood, a century later, was content to refer his readers to Ayton’s authority. Their compromise is that which was generally popular: so long as the abbot knows what the monk has, and gives his consent for the time at least, while the monk is ready at any moment to give up all his possessions in answer to the abbot’s summons, then there is no guilty *proprietas*. Here, however, was a fatal flaw; the abbot’s knowledge, and the monk’s readiness to disburse, tended almost mechanically to become a mere legal fiction. Human nature would suggest this, and orthodox reformers insist upon it as a fact. Therefore it is, I think, impossible to find a single theologian of first-rate ability and piety who supported this compromise in the Middle Ages: for we cannot include in that class the canon lawyers whose task it was to find some *modus vivendi* under a law which men would evidently refuse to obey; men who, like Ayton, felt it better to work for a frankly imperfect half than for an impossible whole.

Aelred of Rievaulx [1150] notes in general terms the excessive use of abbatial dispensations, “so that in many [*plura*] monasteries the monks practise in no single particular all that is prescribed in the Rule.”² Abbot Samson of St Edmundsbury [1190]

commanded that all keys of chests and cupboards and cases should be surrendered, and forbade us all in future to possess a chest or anything else under lock and key, except by licence: nor might any possess anything in any other way, except as the Rule permitted. Yet to each of us he gave a general licence to possess money up to two shillings, if by chance it were given to us by way of charity; yet on condition that it should be spent on our poor kinsfolk or upon pious uses.³

The Council of Tours (1231) expressly condemned what Thomassinus rightly calls the “hollow pretext” upon which proprietaries pleaded abbatial licence, “since” (decreed the Council) “the abbot’s licence cannot help them in this matter”.⁴

One of the standard books of St Thomas’s age was the

¹ Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, p. 269 and Appendix 1, p. 146. For fuller text see Appendix here.

² *P.L.* cxcv, col. 609. Cf. Berlière, *Honorius*, p. 473.

³ Jocelin of Brakelond, *C.S.* p. 28.

⁴ Thomassinus, III, 349, § 5.

Speculum Morale, attributed generally to Vincent of Beauvais, but almost certainly written by some contemporary brother-Dominican of the same intellectual tradition [1260]. The author, coming to this subject, writes:

In a certain abbey, when a new abbot had been elected, he commanded all his monks to give up their property to him for the payment of the abbey's debts, on condition that he would thenceforward grant them licence to keep and gain property, up to the value of 40 *sols*, to be spent at their will. Hearing this, a certain old monk, literate and of good report, rose up before them all and besought the abbot to give them license for making contracts at law. Then, while others laughed and the abbot said that this was impossible, the old man answered: "Even as thou canst not do this, which is against our vow, so also thou canst not grant dispensations for private property to a monk."¹

Abbots, however, were under a double temptation to culpable leniency on this point. In the first place, it was one of the most difficult to enforce, and therefore most likely to provoke quarrels and even rebellions in the house, sometimes to the peril of the disciplinarian's own life. Secondly, and perhaps still more important, the abbot himself was, by gradual development of his separate *mensa* and his baronial or squirearchical character, almost essentially a proprietor himself. We see this from the matter-of-course way in which an ex-abbot, whether he has resigned or even has been deposed for serious malpractices, is handsomely pensioned to lead a quasi-private life of his own. Martin, the reforming abbot of the Schottenkloster, discusses this at length. He himself had refused such a pension when he resigned in old age, and he had consulted with many learned and pious men, who were unanimous that it was scarcely possible to escape *proprietas* on those terms, especially if (as he implies was usual) the resigning abbot had made them himself. In any case, he must not treat his pension as an income which he is free to spend at will; to avoid sin, he must give written account for every farthing of it, and every item of expense.²

Yet disciplinarians, while recognizing this difficulty, are almost unanimous in denying, or very considerably restricting, the

¹ [Vincent of Beauvais] *Speculum Morale*, lib. III, pars viii, dist. 18 (ed. Douai, col. 1335).

² H. Pez, *Scriptt. Rer. Aust.* (1743), II, 662. See Appendix.

abbot's dispensing power. Bishop Alvarez Pelayo [1335] expressly denies it, although "all Religious superiors commonly use it".¹ Abbot Gilles li Muisis of Tournai [1350] denies it:² so does the [Franciscan] author of *Dives and Pauper* [1400]³ and the Dominican Nider.⁴ Dionysius the Carthusian [1450] quotes and approves the decision of Dietrich v. Münster, who was Chancellor of Cologne University in his time. The abbot has no real power of dispensation: "the superior cannot at his own will hand over a *peculium* or money to his brethren in the convent, especially to such as hold no office which involves money. . . he sins grievously in doing so."⁵ Again, in his treatise on nunnery-discipline the nun asks: "Has the abbess authority to license nuns in the possession of certain moneys and other things for their own use, wherefrom they may provide for themselves?" Her spiritual adviser answers: "Not the Supreme Pontiff himself can give nuns such a licence for possessing things of their own, or such things appropriated to them as many nuns now have." Dionysius was one of the standard authors of his century: but, as a Carthusian, he was naturally on the stricter side. Even more important, therefore, is the judgement of Trithemius who, as abbot of a monastery in the reformed Congregation of Bursfeld, at a time when that reform had more than seventy years of practical experience, devoted a special treatise to the discussion of *The Vice of Proprietas*. On this point of the abbot's dispensing power, he wrote:

First, we must ask whether it be at the abbot's choice to dispense with a monk for private property. To this question, at the outset, we answer in the words of the Supreme Pontiff: "Nor let an abbot imagine that he may grant any monk a dispensation for private property; since the abdication of property, like the keeping of chastity, is so bound up with the Monastic Rule that not even the Supreme Pontiff can grant a licence in relaxation thereof" [*Decret. Greg.* lib. III, tit. xxxv, c. 6: decree of Innocent III]. The question is resolved; the negative is necessarily the true answer, and must therefore be conceded. Now, let the abbots who neglect these things consider in how great peril they are set, since they indulge their

¹ *De Planctu Ecclesiae*, ff. 130 a, 210 b.

² *Poésies*, II, 170.

³ *Com.* iv, c. 20 *ad fin.*

⁴ *De Ref.* pp. 20, 73-83, 235.

⁵ *Opera*, xxxviii, 236-7.

monks with property in the teeth of the Rule and of the pope's prohibition.¹

Here, again, is a decree of one of the Bursfeld General Chapters which Trithem has recorded:

Seeing that *proprietas* is always pernicious to monks, and the ruin of the whole Order [*totius Religionis eversio*], therefore we strictly prohibit all prelates from allowing private property to any of their brethren, because, seeing that the pope himself confesses that he dares not do so, as may clearly be read in Canon Law (*Decret. Greg. lib. III, tit. xxv, c. 6*), it must be held most rash for any inferior to presume to do so in any way.²

Even more emphatic is the Augustinian Robert Richardson (Richardinus), who wrote in 1530 from an experience both of French and of Scottish monasteries, and who is particularly scornful of the legal fiction by which the monks offered their keys to the abbot: "they know that their superiors will never keep those keys, and therefore there is a mutual consent between them to break the property-rule."³

We find the same unanimity among orthodox disciplinarians when we come down to more modern times. The legist Pavi enumerates, among other abbatial transgressions which it was part of the visitor's official duty to probe: "Does he permit any monks to possess money, in violation of [Innocent III's statute]?"⁴

Martène, commenting on that sentence of the Rule, "Nor let it be lawful for him to have anything which the abbot has not given or permitted," writes: "We must not so interpret this as to mean that the abbot can permit private property, seeing that (as we have quoted above from Innocent III) not even the Supreme Pontiff can do that" (p. 429). Van Espen's long disquisition on the subject is summarized in his index:

The abdication of *peculium* is so essential to monastic life that not even the Supreme Pontiff can dispense on that point. The *peculium* of a monk resembles in many respects that of a slave. *Peculium* and

¹ *Opera Pia* (1605), p. 732.

² *Opera Pia*, 1058.

³ Full extracts in my *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 241. Jouenneaux [1503] puts this more plainly: if the abbot tries to command expropriation, monks are ready even to go to law with him (*French Monasticism*, 5).

⁴ *Tract. Jur.* XIV, f. 139, § 51.

private property are synonymous terms; and monks who have *peculium* are counted as proprietary. The reservation of revenue, and livelihood, and any other thing whatsoever, for private use, is diametrically opposed to the vow of poverty; even though it be done by licence of the superiors, and in dependence on their will and command.¹

His contemporary Thomassinus, commenting on the prohibition of *proprietas* by the Council of Trent, adds, "for, through this too immoderate indulgence and licence on the part of abbots, the greed of property had broken into the monasteries and had divided and dissipated their endowments".²

The last resort, therefore, of the advocate for *proprietas* was to plead custom. Here he had far stronger ground than a modern reader might think; for medieval law was to a great extent customary: the basis of feudalism was custom, and not only State law but even that of the Church was permeated with feudal conceptions. Indeed, some of the most valued ecclesiastical privileges rested mainly on this foundation. It was a maxim of Canon Law, for instance, that an immemorial custom, so long as it be a pious custom, acquires the force of positive law; and of course the Church alone was judge of piety or impiety in this field. Some of the most lucrative ecclesiastical revenues derived from that source—the Mass-penny, for instance, and mortuaries and other fees which came very near to simoniacal sale of things spiritual. This plea of custom, therefore, required serious attention from the rigorists. Theologically, they had here an easy task; for the most specious advocate could scarcely claim piety for this custom. In so far as any such attempt was made, it was on the ground that peace in the cloister is a matter of great spiritual value, and that reasonable abbatial indulgences conduce to peace. Their critics, on the other hand, insisted that the introduction of the money factor was one of the most fertile causes of quarrel. Moreover, they vehemently repudiated the tendency to override the Rule by tradition. The monks of Monte Cassino wrote to their brethren of Hersfeld [1100]: "We approve if anything tolerable be added in any monastery, but only so long as the precept of the Rule be not lost"; and the contemporary St William of Hirschau speaks of these customs as often marking a degeneration from the

¹ *Jus Eccles.* (1715), t. I (pars I, t. xxix, c. 1 ff.).

² III, 351, § 10.

original Benedictine spirit.¹ Such customs, it was complained, deserved to be called not *consuetudines* but *corruptelae*. In one of the versions of Petrus Cantor's *Verbum Abbreviatum*, the writer speaks indignantly against the nullifying of wholesome laws by unhealthy traditions, and quotes from Seneca: "It is the crown of evil when we live according to the example of evil folk."² Others quoted from St Augustine: "A man will burn no less in hell because others burn there with him." Yet the monk naturally pleaded: "Everyone round me breaks the Rule, then why not I?"³

¹ Hauck, *Kirchengesch. Deutschlands* (1906), III, 379, 511.

² Migne, *P.L.* ccv, col. 552.

³ Richardinus: see *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 241. So also Nider, *De Ref. Rel.* pp. 39, 41, 44, 66-7, 70, 157; v. d. Hardt, III, 149, 156. The opportunities and temptations for amassing private property come out very clearly from the interesting enquiry of 1325, recorded in the *Litterae Cantuarienses*, R.S. I, 147ff.; cf. pp. 192, 200, 225, 232, 365-6.

CHAPTER XXV

THE COMMENDAM SYSTEM

IN Canon Law, then, "the rigorist side was completely victorious; but, in practice, human nature swept all their arguments away; for this *consuetudo-corruptela* had gathered force, and even acquired a sort of venerable respectability, from generation to generation. One by one, therefore, the authorities capitulated. At St-Vincent-de-Laon, as early as 1075, the monks were so attached to their *peculium* that their abbot St Gerard, "finding the evil irremediable, resolved to abandon these incurable patients who most unwillingly suffered the presence of their physician."¹ At St Gall, things had taken this course from the ninth century onward.² *Proprietas* (as it would have been called in earlier days) was regularly recognized at St-Hubert by 1330, and about the same time at Autun,³ and at Paisley in [1430].⁴ Ruysbroeck [1370] tells us of his own Flanders:

Each monk takes his own pension, and looks after himself, as though they were in the world; and this is done by leave of the superior... Mark now; is this life according to St Benedict's Rule, or St Augustine's? That would need hard glossing; for here is neither the colour nor the deed; for the Rules teach us a retired life with renunciation of the world, whereby we may find God and possess Him in unity of the Spirit.⁵

Tritheim shows (cap. vii) how impossible it was found to enforce the Rule. One abbot says, while allowing them to buy and sell their clothes, "I am not indulging my monks with property, but granting them necessities": to which Tritheim answers: "And what has become of the Statutes of Pope Benedict XII and the Chapter General, which forbid the practice of giving monks their necessities in money?" He goes on to quote and rebut their plea that the monks' customary

¹ Wyard, p. 165.

² *Der Adel u.s.w.* p. 110; cf. p. 95.

³ *St-Hubert*, p. 172; Bulliot, pp. 265, 285, 287-8.

⁴ Details in *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 96, from *Reg. de Pas.* p. 336.

⁵ *Werken*, II, 189; *Opera*, ed. Surius, p. 151.

resignation of the keys of their chests to the abbot every Easter excused them from *proprietas*. At last he compels the (imaginary) abbot to confess: "This property, which they resign by a mere mental fiction, I indulgently give back because I fear their fury."¹ And in his next chapter he sums up the results. "When the monk has laid up a little money, it seems to him that he can no longer stay in that monastery. Gradually, he recalls with displeasure and nausea everything that he sees." His thoughts are full of money; money becomes his aim, "he steals the offerings and secretly sells his thefts". He begs from relations, and trades with the money he has accumulated. Now, then, he is independent of his abbot; when rebuked, he answers him back or flatly disobeys; he finds fault with his superiors, and incites others to do the same. He thinks his monastery a prison, and rejects the common food and common dress. "For such is the force of this vice that, little by little, when it has once infected one monk in the congregation, it hurls him into a gulf of iniquity." The man is always thinking of his money, and furtive concealment becomes a habit of his mind. A briefer but equally indignant summary is given in Chapter II:

The abdication of property doth so pertain to the substance of monasticism that, without this, no man can be called *monk*.... Chastity is never truly acquired if obedience be deserted. O! how many men of our day show themselves unworthy of the name of monk! men who are bodily present in the monasteries, but who live in thought and in act as worldlings. They scrape together again that private property which they have dismissed; they despise that obedience which they have promised; they violate that chastity to which they have solemnly sworn. They fear not to transgress the three substantial vows of their Religion; yet they boast themselves as monks!

In England, where things were better on the whole than in Flanders or Germany at that time, we have the priceless evidence of monastic chartularies and account-rolls and orthodox visitors. These show not only that the monks received clothes-money and pocket-money, as we have already seen, but, what is far more

¹ For the frequency of this plea that the monk, being ready to resign, is not proprietary, see for instance v. d. Hardt, III, 140, 142, 144. For the falsity of the plea see *French Monasticism*, 5. Rather than resign it (writes Jouenneux) they are ready to go to law for it.

important, that the custom was now recognized by the visitors not only as tolerable, but as legally imperative. At Canterbury Cathedral, in 1376, there was a regular official scale, sanctioned by the archbishop after his visitation, of money-payments to monks in the infirmary. Again, in 1473, Archbishop Bouchier provided for his own soul by paying 1s. 8d. per week to the monk who was appointed to sing daily Mass for him, "over and beyond all other distributions and emoluments which may be owed to that monk, and given by custom, from our priory."¹ At Buckenham Priory, in 1493, there were ten brethren with the prior. Each of these received £2 a year for pocket-money, while the total income of the priory was only £110.² At Dover Priory, in 1530, the subprior had £2 a year as "wages" [*vadia*]; the seven other monks from £1. 6s. 8d. to £1. 13s. 4d. each, and the three novices £1. 6s. 8d. Such pensions form a common item in monastic accounts, and are often very valuable to the historian as showing the numbers of the community at a given time. And, with regard to the episcopal attitude, we have ample evidence from the official visitations. Bishop Gray of Lincoln, in his visitation of Bardney [1435], commanded:

Seeing that each monk receives yearly from the common goods of the monastery only twenty shillings for his habit and bedclothes, and of this they have not had meet satisfaction, we enjoin upon you, abbot, under the penalties written above and beneath, that you cause provision and supply of this their private property [*peculium*], inasmuch as it is very moderate, to be made to the monks your brethren without lapse of delay, considering that, according to the truth of the Gospel, the labourer in the lord's vineyard must not be defrauded of his daily penny.³

¹ *Lit. Cant. R.S.* III, 4, 265, 269.

² Blomefield, *Norfolk* (1805), I, 388.

³ *Lincoln Record Soc.* VII, 4 (ed. A. Hamilton Thompson, 1914). Since I have been accused of relying too much upon these visitation-documents, which past historians in England had almost completely ignored or falsified, it may be well to point out here how difficult or impossible it would have been to measure the official attitude towards *proprietas* in the later Middle Ages without such records. Visitors' reports, it is true, are prone to lay more stress on defects discovered or suspected than upon more favourable points. But I am not conscious of ever stressing such evidence except where it agrees with the general orthodox contemporary judgements of ecclesiastics and lay-folk; and, indeed, the severest strictures passed upon my second volume have rested upon the long catena which I collected from such evidence, quite apart from the visitors' standpoint.

There are other similar testimonies in these Lincoln visitations. From Norwich diocese we get the same evidence; if the monks are not getting their customary pensions, they complain to the visitor, who rebukes the abbot or prior.¹ The Premonstratensian visitations yield the same results. At Newhouse, in 1478, Bishop Redman "commanded the abbot, under pain of contempt, . . . that he shall faithfully pay 20s. a year to each of the brethren who are priests." At Alnwick, in 1488, while recalling the theory that the brother must render up to the abbot any gift made to him, under pain of the fate of Judas, he goes on, "we commanded the lord abbot to provide the community sufficiently with the pension which is customary in the Order, and with a livelihood discreetly ordered according to the revenues of the abbey, in order that they may have no occasion for murmuring on this account."² The historian of Prémontré, under the year 1532, writes: "Abstinence from private property was vanishing more and more from the habits of the Premonstratensian monasteries."³ Mary Bateson, who published a translation of Archbishop Warham's visitation of 1511, partly in correction of Froude's exaggerations, writes in her preface:

It becomes fairly obvious from such answers as are given here [by monks and nuns], that what the inmates chiefly cared about was the amount of their pocket-money or "stipend". One answer gives it as a plain fact that the examinee knows no one will enter that house for choice, because the pension is paid to each monk in kind, not in money. The conception of community of property as an element of the monastic life had been entirely dismissed, and the amount of the monastic endowment became an important consideration in choosing a house as an abode. . . . The nuns in one house complain that not one of their body will undertake the office of "Convent Servant", and all their weekly "stipends" are reduced because they have to get a woman in from the town.⁴

Yet in England the Dissolution came while we were still only on the brink of that "commendam" system which brought so

¹ *E.g.* Westacre priory, 1514 (*Vis. Norwich*, C.S. 1888, p. 106). This Westacre, whence some of the loudest complaints come, was one of the least respectable houses of the diocese.

² *Collectanea Anglo-Prem.* C.S. II, 23; III, 69; it is here, among other places, that the C.S. text gives the nonsense *traditoris inde*. For other pages which show *proprietas* in the English houses of this Order, see *ibid.* II, 19, 31, 64, 102, 130, 133, 178, 227-8; III, 4, 92, 117, 187.

³ Taïé, II, 22.

⁴ *E.H.R.* VI, 19.

many Continental houses to financial ruin and almost corresponding religious decay. For this system popes and sovereigns were mainly responsible, though the monks themselves, as we have seen, offered every temptation to such spoilers. The matter is of such immense importance in monastic history, yet so neglected in Britain, that I must here deal with it at some length.¹

The reader is already prepared to follow the steps which led almost inevitably to such an abuse. They cannot be put better, within the compass of half a page, than as they were rehearsed in 1688 by Abbé Fleury, the author of that great *Histoire Ecclésiastique* which gave a Gallican tone to the labours of Baronius and his continuators.

All the monks, even the Cistercians, fell into great relaxation towards the end of the [fourteenth] century. The abbots, like other prelates, led the lives of great lords and wasted the goods of their abbeys, so that it became necessary to set aside a certain revenue for each of the claustral officers—prior, chamberlain, cellarer, infirmarer, almoner—in order that they might be able to meet their expenses; and these offices were finally raised by the popes to the status of benefices, ordinarily in the abbot's gift. Meanwhile the monks deserted community-life, living separately on pensions which were allowed separately. Thus the monks' places became little benefices, and were sought after as mere worldly establishments by men who then led a thoroughly worldly life; and the name of monk, so venerable in ancient times, became a byword, giving the idea of an idle and worthless man.²

The growth of the *commendam* system, in the region of concrete fact, can scarcely be better traced than in the story of the abbey of Caunes in southern France.³ But for a complete synthesis, with illustrative details, we must turn to Thomassinus and Van Espen.⁴

¹ It is not even mentioned, I believe, in Fosbroke's *British Monachism* or in Gasquet's *English Monastic Life*. In his *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* the word occurs in a single line, where Wolsey's abbacy of St Albans is mentioned (I, 22). Fr Taunton devotes 3½ pages to the subject in his *English Black Monks of St Benedict* (I, 139ff.) but is very misleading at times. Abbot Butler (*Benedictine Monachism*, pp. 243-4) seems to be following the same source, and is equally misleading.

² C. Fleury, *Institution au droit ecclésiastique*, ch. xxvi (ed. 1688, I, 215).

³ Béziat, *Abbaye de Caunes*; the growth, pp. 155ff., and the effects of the system, pp. 167, 213, 215.

⁴ Thomassinus, *Vetus et nova Ecclesiae Disciplina*, pars II, lib. iii, esp. cc. 19ff. (ed. 1705, II, 607). Van Espen, *Jus Ecclesiasticum Universum*, pars I, tit. xxxi, c. 7 (ed. 1715, I, 263). I shall refer to these as T and E respectively.

In the Dark Ages abbeys were often given over, for a "protection" which was too often merely nominal, even to lay lords: this we have already seen. This was worst of all, perhaps, under the successors of Charlemagne. In 938, when Lothair, son of Hugh King of Italy, was betrothed to Adelaide, daughter to the ex-King of Burgundy, the lady received in dowry "the *commendam* of certain abbeys in Tuscany, among which was that of Sesto in the county of Lucca, with 2000 *mansi*"—i.e. land sufficient to maintain 2000 peasants.¹ Bishops and clergy naturally fought against this; and, as society became more settled, it was possible to recover a good deal of this prey from the usurpers; but then the system revived on the Church side. Hatto, Archbishop of Mainz [900], is said to have held twelve monasteries simultaneously (Ekkehardus Junior, *De Casibus S. Galli*, c. 1). We find Gregory VII, the great reformer, granting abbeys *in commendam* to a bishop and another great secular cleric (T, p. 608, § 3). By 1105, it was possible for a German abbot, raised to the episcopate, to beg leave for retaining his abbacy *in commendam*, "as others had done".² Thus,

in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it befel more frequently that bishops, either by their own authority or by that of the pope, retained abbacies for themselves under the title of *commendam* or administration. For, seeing that the Holy Land was occupied by the infidels about that time, many bishops were driven from their sees, and were thus a sort of bishop *in partibus*; to such, for their sustentation, the pontiffs granted bishoprics or monasteries to be held in perpetual *commendam*. Afterwards, when monastic discipline, in many houses both of monks and of canons regular, had become much decayed, and community-life had ceased almost everywhere, and the monastic revenues were being dilapidated, and the Regular abbots³ lived not as monks or canons vowed to poverty but as counts or barons, busy to enrich their kinsfolk or friends with the abbey goods, and already in many monasteries there was a division between the abbot's and the monks' revenues, and the abbots used theirs as though they were absolute owners, then this occasion was seized by cardinals, and

¹ *Annales Camaldulenses* (Mittarelli and Costadoni, 1755), I, 339.

² Mabillon, *Ann. Bened.* v, 452.

³ *Abbas Regularis* is one duly elected by his brethren according to the Rule, as distinguished from *Commendatarius*, imposed upon the abbey by a bishop or pope.

other prelates who had influence with popes and kings, to request that such monasteries should be granted to themselves *in commendam*, under pretext of reforming and restoring them. Thus the monasteries were snatched from the hands of layfolk and came into those of cardinals, prelates, and clerics under the pretext of commendation or administration, by a more specious title (as it seemed) yet with no better fortune. For it soon appeared that this zeal for reform and restoration had been naught but a mere pretext for swallowing the monastic revenues; for the houses thus commended were not restored or reformed, but rather were straightway brought to ruin and deformity. For these abbots commendatory were occupied with the one single concern of increasing their revenues; whence it followed that they left little or nothing for the maintenance of the monks, the celebration of divine service, the exercise of hospitality, the relief of the poor, and the upkeep or repair of the fabric. Clement V, in that constitution of the second year of his pontificate (1305), declared how frequent was this practice at the beginning of the fourteenth century (E, pp. 264-5).

Clement, indeed, confessed publicly there that he had been betrayed into these grants in some cases by personal friendship and in return for favours received from great folk, "at the importunate and multiplied pressure of the petitioners' prayers" (E, p. 265; T, p. 611). "But," continued the pope, "after experience and reflexion, we saw clearly that the care of these men's churches and monasteries is neglected, their goods and rights are dissipated, the persons and congregations subject to them are grievously endamaged both spiritually and temporally, and that is their bane which was said to make for their profit." Therefore Clement formally revoked all promises of grants *in commendam* which he might have made, even to cardinals; and the constitution was embodied in Canon Law. "From which", comments Van Espen, "we learn, first of all, that popes recognize that they are men and can sometimes be subject in their actions to human partialities, and that they would not have their own deeds become a rule of action for other men" (p. 265). Thomas-sinus comments: "Errors so splendidly amended turn even to praise and glory. But whether Clement, in actual execution, proceeded according to his inmost convictions, I cannot so clearly determine" (p. 612). In any case, this decree had so little effect that Bishop Guillaume Durand, in the memorial he drew

up for the Council of Vienne (1311), specified among the worst sores of the Church

that cardinals procure *in commendam* even cathedral churches, and even beyond the seas; by which plague it has even been introduced of late, against all law, that these lord cardinals, as though their secular benefices were not enough, procure the grant to themselves and to their friends of conventual priories and other Church benefices which hitherto had been governed by monks and other Religious; although such commendatories take no monastic vows.

This protest, again, was ineffectual; the practice rather increased, and especially during the Great Schism, when rival popes were desperately in need of money.¹ The Council of Constance (1414-18) vainly attempted to restrict the practice (T, p. 613). Paul II [1465] confessed his belief that 500 monasteries had been "commended" during the past ten years (E, p. 265; T, p. 613); we must regard this round number with caution, considering the medieval habit of exaggeration. Yet here, again, the abuse continued so steadily that it could plead something like official prescription. One case where we find a certain degree of papal resistance is almost more significant than those in which popes had yielded (T, p. 614). In 1475, Sixtus refused to grant the archbishopric of Saragossa *in commendam* to a six-year-old bastard of the King of Aragon: it was a thing to which neither he nor his cardinals could consent. "The king, enraged at this repulse, was so savagely hostile to cardinal Valentino, to whom the pope had given that metropolitan see, and besieged the pope himself with so many mines and engines and artifices, that he compelled him to commend to this puny infant the perpetual administration of that church." Upon which the orthodox Spondanus comments: "The pontiff's fault, as every man must see, was far graver than the king's, yet to each it must suffice for condemnation"—*satis utrisque ad damnationem idonea*. The next definite move was taken by Leo X, at the Lateran Council of 1514. He deplored that

as experience, our mistress in business, hath often taught, the monasteries themselves, through these grants *in commendam*, are

¹ Dom Félibien, in his *Histoire de l'Abbaye de St-Denis*, emphasizes the responsibility of the Avignon popes, from Clement V onwards, for the growth of the *commendam* system, "one of the main causes of the decay of monastic discipline and the ruin of the abbeys" (p. 362). See also Dom Baunier in his introduction to the *Recueil historique des archevêchés, etc. de France* (1906), I, xvii; cf. xx. Even more emphatically in *Revue Mabillon* (1931), XXI, 28-9.

grievously harmed in both spirituals and temporals; for their edifices are falling into ruin partly by the negligence of the commendatories and partly through greed and carelessness, and the worship of God is daily more diminished therein, and everywhere matter of reproach is afforded, especially to layfolk, not without diminution of the dignity of this Apostolic See from which these commendations take rise.

He therefore forbade the introduction of the system into monasteries which as yet had not suffered; but he allowed it to be renewed, where it already existed, "to cardinals and persons of good qualifications and of merit". This loophole alone, as Thomassinus points out, was enough to vitiate the whole project of reform; for we know "how fatal it is, and how common, for human affections and private greed to be covered with the cloak of public utility and the Church's needs" (p. 614). To transcribe a more modern summary of this episode:

Even the Council of Trent, honestly zealous as it was for reform, ventured no more than to express its confidence that "The Roman Pontiff in his piety and prudence would, *so far as he saw the times would bear it*, set over monasteries at present held *in commendam* [by seculars] monastic persons belonging to the respective Orders, capable of representing and ruling the communities".¹

Therefore the practical result, as Van Espen notes, was that, "since this Council, the practice of *Commendae* has subsisted in Italy without any interruption down to the present day".² France and Spain, however, were the countries which suffered most. The Concordat of Leo X with Francis I gave certain paper

¹ Addis and Arnold, *A Catholic Dictionary* (3rd ed.), p. 198.

² P. 266. Father Taunton here goes sadly astray. He writes (p. 140): "At last [about 1412] the man appeared who should make *commendam* no longer possible among black monks.... The reform of St Justina, a drastic remedy for a terrible disease, was successful and spread rapidly throughout Italy." The fact is that, at its best, this congregation numbered only about 190 houses. See Heimbucher, I, 285. At the Council of Trent, it was the Italian bishops who showed the least zeal for reforming *commendam* abuses, and acted as a drag upon the wheel (T, p. 615). Dom Butler (p. 244) seems to follow the same ultra-optimistic judgement as Fr Taunton. Yet here, for example, is a conspicuous case. San Michele della Chiusa, once the possessor of 170 churches and great territorial domains, was put into *commendam* by papal licence, at the prayer of the Count of Savoy, in 1379. Within a few years, the abbey presented "a mere shadow of its ancient monastic life". By 1626 it was reduced from sixty or seventy monks to three priests, with one blind old lay-brother (Claretta, p. 386). Again, the equally great abbey of San Prospero at Reggio was still subject to the old disorders in 1438 and 1519. The harm there wrought by *commendam* is set forth in Dom Affarosi's history of the abbey, II, 9, 10, 36-45, 96, 108, 131, 138, 148, 154, 330.

guarantees against abuses; but the general result was to the disadvantage of the abbey, by collusion between pope and king. This became so general that, at the Revolution, 850 French abbeys were being held *in commendam*.¹

We shall see how much depended on the religious and the temporal sovereign when we look into the cases of Belgium and England.

Van Espen is naturally proud of his native Belgium (pp. 267ff.). The opening of the floodgates threatened in the fifteenth century; but in 1476 the Abbot General of the Premonstratensians, who was then a Belgian and at the court of Sixtus IV, obtained from that pope a letter to Charles of Burgundy rehearsing the frequent evils arising from *commendae* and exhorting him in Christ's name not to press for such favours on behalf of his protégés, but rather to rebuff them. He concludes:

And be not moved by the suggestions of certain persons who plead that, by reason that the morals of Religious persons may perchance be corrupt, their convents ought to be commended to seculars; for it is far better to reform and correct such persons and their convents from top to bottom, than to give them over to *commendam* and plunder [*direptionem*].

Yet, within a few weeks of that letter, the papal nuncio and cardinal Philibert of Mâcon obtained from Sixtus letters of *commendam* for two rich Premonstratensian abbeys in Belgium. The Premonstratensians were a powerful Order, and they had here the support of the dukes and the parliament of Brabant. At last, after a struggle of four years, and seven bulls from Sixtus in favour of the papal nuncio, his appointment was quashed by the pope as inconsistent with Premonstratensian privileges, and that same year the cardinal also was non-suited. Matters slept thus until [1520], when Charles V promised a great abbey *in commendam* to the bishop of Liège, in violation of his coronation oath, but with papal connivance. Then the Estates, assembled at Antwerp, protested against this:

and if he insist upon it, they refuse the benevolence, saying that in times past no abbey has been given *in commendam*, "and that the

¹ Chassin, *Les Cahiers des Curés* (1882), p. 45. These formed at least four-fifths of all the abbeys of France (P. de la Gorce, *Hist. rel. de la révolution* (1917), p. 19).

beginning of the cardinal de Toledo with Afflighem hath caused the evil consequence to divers other monasteries". The abbots are supported by their kinsmen in the towns, and the Emperor will have great difficulty in carrying it, especially as another abbey, lately void in Hainault by the decease of the Emperor's father, has been given to the said Cardinal.¹

The bishop desisted from his claim "in consideration of a notable pension". Van Espen knew of no later attempt to break the oath taken by each duke at his accession "that they will give no abbeys, prelacies, or dignities of Brabant *in commendam*, nor will they in any way command or permit them to be given".

The English story is still more significant: *commendam* scarcely appears with us between William the Conqueror and Henry VIII. The modern *Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary* (Cassell, 1931, p. 263, s.v. *In Commendam*) may be taken as a fair summary of the accepted teaching on this subject.

This was an abuse already in the eighth century and was responsible more than any other single cause for spiritual and material decay in monasteries, which became a temporal part of the feudal system; it was at its worst in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and in France continued till the Revolution. Cardinal Richelieu held twenty abbeys; St-Germain-des-Prés had princes and a king among its commendatory abbots. In England, at any rate after William I, this abuse was unknown among the monasteries; Wolsey holding St Albans *in commendam* was the first and only example.

This, it will be seen, needs some qualification.

Under William I, the equilibrium between Church and State was better than in any other great country of Europe. As Dr Z. N. Brooke points out, he was unquestioned master in England, while France and Germany were comparatively anarchical; secondly, no papalist party had been formed here comparable to those of the Continent; and, "thirdly, and most important of all, he was a sincere supporter of Church reform".² Thus he was a king not tempted to introduce this abuse himself, and not of a temper to suffer its importation from overseas. Again, even William II, for all his rapacity, did not plunder the Church through such royal *commendae* as had been common on the Continent. In only one case does any English king seem to

¹ Letters and Papers, Hen. VIII, III, No. 988: place-names corrected.

² *The English Church and the Papacy* (Camb. Univ. Press, 1931), p. 146.

have granted a *commendam* without papal permission; and, even here, the powerful and resolute Alexander III seems to have added at least a tacit consent.

Roger of Hoveden, under the year 1175, records how Henry II gave the abbacy of Abingdon *in commendam* to the bishop of St Asaph, whom the hostile Welsh had driven from his see. Thomassinus very naturally accepts this as an act which, if not strictly according to Canon Law, was justified by its good intention (p. 609).

Presently, however, the thin end of the wedge came with papal presentations, not indeed of abbeys, but of appropriated parishes, to favourites, mostly foreigners, who were dispensed from residence and allowed to hold such benefices *in commendam*. Matthew Paris, under the year 1246, transcribes in full the petition of the English abbots to be "relieved from the intolerable grievances and yoke" under which they groaned. The abbots here claimed the support of the whole country:

for the princes and nobles assert that, if these churches which have been bestowed upon monasteries are given to Italians, they can justly resume the ownership of these churches and the other [monastic] endowments; since the revenues thence proceeding should by right be deputed to the use of poor folk and wayfarers, which was the intention of those who gave the endowments, and the cause of the gift.

This document was accompanied by a parallel protest from the nobility. It had little effect; for we have seen in Chapter XXII how freely the popes continued to usurp these rights of advowson, and how large a proportion of such livings was granted *in commendam* to absentees. Thomas Gascoigne [1450] specified such *commendae* as one of the main causes of that degradation of the cure of souls in Bohemia which had provoked the Hussite rebellion.¹ The progress of the evil may be clearly traced in the indexes to the *Calendars of Papal Letters*. There seems no officially recorded case until 1392: this apparently marks the date when it has become a formal and recognized routine. That volume (IV) contains only one other case. But the next has five, VI has fourteen, VII thirty-one; and so we mount to the last two, ending in 1471, which have 111 between them.

¹ *Lib. Veritatum*, p. 7.

But, if our English parishes suffered nearly as much as the Continental, yet the abbeys were scarcely touched; and this is mainly due to the resistance of kings and nobles. When Clement V would have treated us as he treated France, the Benedictine chronicler Graystones tells us how manfully Edward I resisted him. Clement

had a nephew called Raymond de Got, whom he loved dearly. He had made him cardinal; and he gave him the deaneries of Lincoln and London, and many fat benefices in England. He was a youth of good natural parts, but excessively lecherous. The bishop [of Durham], out of spite for his prior, had suggested to the pope that he should give this youth the priorate of Coldingham. But the king, as a good and prudent man, answered the pope's messengers: "Since the pope loves his nephew so dearly, I marvel that he will make a black monk of him." They assured him that the pope had no such thought. Then said the king: "By the holy God, he shall not have that priory unless he take the monastic vows; for thus the pope might confer any of our English abbeys, at his own will, upon seculars, and our alms and those of our progenitors would be destroyed." Happy is the land which hath a noble king!¹

No less emphatic is another Benedictine chronicler, Thomas Walsingham of St Albans. He writes:

In the last days of this abbot Thomas [de la Mare, 1349-96], the exempt abbeys in this kingdom were brought into such servitude that the pope presumed to quash elections which had been duly made, and to put other men in at his own will; until the king and his council plucked up a more lively spirit and decreed resistance against these great evils, as may be shown by the vexations of the abbey of St Edmund, as is set forth more fully in my chronicle.² For the most experienced minds feared that, if the pope had reins to govern at his disposition the abbeys of this realm, as he had in Hungary or Spain, then he would have conferred the richest abbacies on his cardinals or familiar friends, who, for their part, would have striven not to increase the numbers of monks but rather to destroy them; for they coveted nothing more than the goods appertaining to such abbacies; as may be proved by the deserted and ruined state of such monasteries in the county of Provence and in those realms aforesaid. For, in places where there had been eighty monks, now six or four can scarce be maintained; nor do these dwell in the buildings wherein

¹ Wharton, I, 752.

² The reference here is to Walsingham's *Hist. Anglicana*; see vol. I of the R.S. pp. 414-18, 428-30.

Religion once flourished, but they are suffered to wander everywhere, with a yearly or daily wage for their livelihood. In such places, when one or two die, no new monk is taken in, but they are fraudulently permitted to feign the full number, until, when all have left this life, the possessions of the abbeys may pass wholly into the hands of the cardinals, and the vast churches may be made into barns or cattle-stalls.¹

When such was the temper of our kings and their people, it was natural that England should remain almost immune from the prevailing plague. In Ireland it was far worse; for there the royal writ ran less easily, and the nobles were willing to tolerate papal interference so long as they could get their share of the spoils. This holds good to some extent also for Scotland; there, long before the Reformation, the king and the nobility had preyed in concert upon Church endowments, paying the pope his heavy commission for each job. Thus, in Scotland, the richest Church endowments had fallen into these robbers' hands before the monasteries were formally dissolved.² In Ireland, though the partnership was perhaps not so open, yet the abuse took even greater proportions. Among the unprinted Cistercian MSS. at Dijon there is a letter, apparently in fourteenth-century hand, from the abbot of St Mary's abbey by Dublin to the abbot of Cîteaux.

It pleased your highness [*dominationi vestre*] to appoint brother Peter of Bray [*de Braseyo*], a man of great religion, and a monk of our abbey, as your nuncio and receiver-general of contributions in these parts. He, suffering great travail, found (sad to relate!) that the monasteries and cells were almost altogether desolate, and so taken up with pensions and *commendae* given and granted by the Apostolic See, in contradiction of the privileges conceded to our Order, and by constant and intolerable tempest of war, [that they cannot pay their contributions to the General Chapter fund]. Deign to procure the quiescence and cessation of such pensions and *commendae* in Ireland; otherwise that small light of religion which remaineth there will in all likelihood be quenched.³

¹ *Gesta Abbatum*, III, 396.

² For the extent to which this *commendam* system had effected the spoliation of the pre-Reformation Scottish Church, see my *Scottish Abbeys*, pp. 84, 100-1, 113, 145, 247, 253-4, 267.

³ Archives du Côte-d'Or, Cîteaux (*Monastères anglais*), liasse *Correspondance*, 1478-1628. The decay of these Irish Cistercian houses is emphasized in another letter of the same bundle, from the abbot of Mellifont in 1501.



CREAKE ABBEY
(*J. S. Cotman*)

The following list does not pretend to be exhaustive; but it may give an approximate conspectus of monastic *commendae* within these islands, in contrast to the Continental story. The English cases, it will be noted, are all trifling: they are concerned with minor houses—sometimes very small—and have considerable practical justification, until we come to the verge of the Reformation.

In 1392, at the petition of Richard II, Boniface IX granted to one of the royal clerks a ten-years' *commendam* of St Anthony's hospital in London, the brethren of which were Augustinian canons.¹ In 1439 Creake priory (sometimes called abbey) pleaded that it had sunk to one single inmate, "in or about his 75th year", and was so utterly decayed that it was likely to fall into lay hands at his death; therefore he commended it to the prior of neighbouring Walsingham, and the pope approved.² In 1437 the bishopric of Ely was given *in commendam* to the Archbishop of Rouen, a foreigner, whose revenues were dried up by the French wars. The Ely chronicler is careful to note that the pope was a consenting party to this transaction.³ In 1445, we find a papal indult

To Thomas, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of St Mary [Margam], in the diocese of Llandaff. Dispensation, at the recent petition of Henry, king of England and Henry, duke of Warwyk—containing that the said abbot has in many ways repaired and restored the monasteries, founded by the said duke's progenitors, of Morgan [*sic*] and Neth, of which latter he was formerly abbot (*cui olim . . . prefuisti*), both in the diocese of Llandaff, alike in the number of their monks and ministers and divine worship, and in their possessions, etc.—and at his own petition, to hold *in commendam* for life with the said monastery of [Margam], value not exceeding 500*l.* sterling, any other monastery of the said Order.⁴

In this same year, 1445, the pope commended the great house of Scone to the Bishop of St Andrews, and excommunicated "certain enemies of the said bishop" who resisted.⁵ In 1451

¹ *C.P.L.* iv, 430, 473. It was valued at £400 a year. In 1438 the house of the same Order at Rouen was held *in commendam* by an Englishman, *ibid.* ix, 4.

² *C.P.L.* ix, 78. In spite of this it seems to have gone on some time longer in a broken-winged fashion (Dugdale-Caley, vi, 486).

³ Wharton, i, 669; *C.P.L.* ix, 344.

⁴ F. 185 (5 Id. Dec.), kindly communicated to me by Dr Annie Cameron.

⁵ *C.P.L.* viii, 303.

the pope licensed an Augustinian of Launceston to hold (among other possible benefices) even a priory *in commendam*.¹ In 1463 Pius II commended the Cistercian abbey of Tracton to the bishop-elect of Leighlin.² In 1466 he commended to the Bishop of St Andrews the great abbey of Dunfermline and the priory of Petenwen; again, the priory of Whithern to Fergus Magdowel, a cleric of noble birth; and that of Coldingham to Patrick Home, a papal notary.³ In 1469 he gave Kelso abbey "*in commendam* for a certain time" to an archdeacon, and the Premonstratensian monastery of Tuam to an illegitimate son of a priest.⁴ In 1471 Paul II granted to the Bishop of Emly the *commendam* of the priory of Kells.⁵ In 1467 he granted Kelso abbey *in commendam* to an archdeacon on condition that he should now take the Benedictine vows.⁶ In 1469 abbot Cormac Ykahyr, of Kilshanny (Cistercian), complained that Bernard Oconncubayr, clerk,

falsely alleging that the said monastery ought to be granted to him *in commendam*, and that the said Cormac was unlawfully detaining possession of it, brought him and the convent before Thomas Olo[c]hlynd, precentor of Kilfenora, whom he alleged to be the executor of certain papal letters, which are believed to be forged, and by which he alleged that the said monastery was ordered to be granted to him *in commendam*; and that moreover, whilst the cause was pending before the said precentor, the said Bernard, with the support of lay power, went with his accomplices to the said monastery, broke open the doors and, laying violent hands on the said Cormac, grievously wounded him and slew one of his servants, carried off and wasted the goods which they found in the monastery, expelled the canons, after which the said abbot and convent, fearing lest worse things should befall them, consented through fear to an agreement by which they pledged for a sum of money a portion of the immoveable goods of the monastery to the said Bernard, possession of which portion he still unlawfully detains.⁷

In 1469 the little priory of Combwell in Kent was commended by Paul II to the Bishop of Joppa *in partibus infidelium*.⁸ Next year came a problem in Ireland.

¹ *C.P.L.* x, 108. This, of course, depended on his getting a priory; which, as we have seen, was in England almost impossible.

² *C.P.L.* xii, 222.

³ *C.P.L.* xii, 238, 247, 251, 267.

⁴ *C.P.L.* xii, 315, 328.

⁵ *C.P.L.* xii, 374.

⁶ *C.P.L.* xii, 640.

⁷ *C.P.L.* xii, 667.

⁸ *C.P.L.* xii, 696. The whole income of Combwell priory, about a century earlier, had amounted to only £66. 2s. 6d.

The pope has been informed by William de Burgo, provost of Tuam, that Malachy Omullanayll, abbot of the monastery of St Michael, Mayo (*de Magio*), O.S.A., in the diocese of Tuam, openly keeps a certain woman within the precincts of the said monastery as a concubine, and with her dilapidates the immoveable goods of the monastery, and consumes them for unlawful and depraved uses, and that on account of his evil rule, etc., the said monastery is in no small degree collapsed. The pope, therefore, hereby orders the above three, if the said William, who alleges that he is of a race of nobles and earls, will accuse the said Malachy before them, to summon Malachy and others concerned, and if they find the foregoing to be true, to deprive and remove Malachy, and in that event to grant the said monastery, value not exceeding 24 marks sterling, to the said William, to be held by him for life *in commendam* with the said provostship, the value of which does not exceed 3 marks sterling.¹

In 1471 Richard Redman, Abbot of Shap, was made Bishop of St Asaph, and afterwards of Exeter and Ely: but he retained his abbacy, and the register of his visitations seems to show plainly that he was still abbot in 1500, when that record ends. So far as St Asaph was concerned, there was a good reason: that see had been devastated in the Welsh wars, and the wealthy abbacy would raise its revenues to something near its former income. But, even during those 24 years, it is difficult to understand how Cardinal Gasquet can maintain that this is no case of *commendam*; for Redman was an active bishop in Wales, and must have been mainly a non-resident abbot at Shap.² From 1495 to 1505 it would seem perfectly plain that he cannot have been other than a commendatory abbot. Again, in 1497 the Bishop of Carlisle was also abbot commendatory of St Mary's, York.³ Then at last, on the verge of the Reformation [1516], we have a commendatory abbot of the full-blooded Continental type at St Albans, in Thomas Wolsey, who held the abbacy in conjunction with two bishoprics and many other benefices. Newcome, the historian of St Albans, expresses the natural feelings

¹ C.P.L. XII, 795. For the extent to which this system was responsible for muddle and litigation see the case of Tintern in Appendix.

² *Collectanea Anglo-Prem.* I, xix, "not merely *in commendam* but as the governing superior". But every commendatory abbot had the government of the house in theory, and many exercised it in practice.

³ *Reg. Fox (Durham)*, Surtees Soc. (1932), p. 56.

of an Englishman who knew no precedent for this in our history:

"When Wolsey took this abbey *in commendam*, it was such a breach of the canon law, and such an invasion of that rule and government in which abbeys had been holden, that it amazed all sober-minded persons who revered the ancient constitution of abbeys; and seemed to portend some fatal blow to that order of the clergy."... "it doth not appear that he ever came down even to take possession; nor, indeed, is there the least tittle of record remaining, to shew what was done during his commendamship, which lasted till his downfall; nor who was his prior; or what material events then affected this house."¹

The appointment was at Henry's will, but it would have been impossible without the pope's consent. Indeed, the enormous responsibility of the Roman Court for this fatal system is most strongly emphasized by most orthodox modern historians. The historian of Prémontré writes:

If these abuses were so many and so grievous, it was not that the Holy See was ignorant of their fatal consequences; for, in this very same bull [in which Martin V, 1475, granted the Premonstratensian Order immunity from certain abusive papal exactions], the following words are to be found: "Seeing that, too often, in consequence of appointments *in commendam* among your monasteries, the number of brethren is diminished and the service of God is thus neglected... We have revoked, quashed and annulled all dispositions liable to pledge and shackle the future [of your Order]."²

Such were the pope's words, but they were as unreal as the repentance of Clement V. As Clement was one of those most directly responsible for the abuse, so these Premonstratensians, a few generations after this apparently inexpugnable papal indult, were fighting in Belgium against a pope who struggled to nullify it, and gained their victory only through princely and popular support. Abbé Bulliot, exposing the working of *commendam* at Autun, points out how the popes of Avignon found here "a means of maintaining a court which could no longer draw resources from Italy. Shared then in turn between popes and kings, in spite of the Councils of Constance and Bâle and Trent and Rouen and Reims and Tours, [the abbacies] ended, in virtue of the Concordat of 1516, by falling into the absolute power of

¹ Dugdale-Caley, II, 206.

² Taiée, p. 144.

the kings". And Abbé Henry, in his history of St-Germain-d'Auxerre: "Canon lawyers maintained that popes could grant dispensations for this sort of simony. Thenceforward, people regarded [monastic] benefices as a patrimony which might be given at one's own will." The papal responsibility, and the enormous waste of money caused by litigation over these *commendae*, are brought out also by the historian of Vendôme.¹ But the most decisive evidence comes from Father Louys François [Micault], in his contemporary treatise of 1674 addressed to a royal chaplain of France. This writer emphasizes the fact that the popes went partners with the kings in the system, and contented themselves with occasional protests never backed up by effective deeds. He begins: "The King is just in demanding *commendae*, the pope is holy in granting them"; and his last words insist that the critic who cannot reconcile himself to the system must arraign the pope before the Inquisition.²

This, then, throws upon Henry VIII's breach with Rome a light which has been strangely neglected by English historians. If Henry, like his contemporary Francis, had only made his court into a harem without committing the further sin of wishing to marry one of those ladies at the expense of a highly-connected princess, he might still have been Defender of the Faith, quite as friendly with Rome as Francis, and able to conclude a Concordat quite as favourable to the crown. But, in that case, we might well have fallen into the situation of France, where the 850 commendatory abbots absorbed the greater part of her revenues and spread moral contagion in Church and State. Here and there, these were serious and pious men; in rare cases, they even did what the system had originally aimed at securing, and, under their benevolent dictatorship, the abbey finance and discipline were restored, if only for a while.³ But, on the whole, the system was bitterly resented by the best contemporary opinion, and it has found no serious defenders in modern times. No student of French monastic monographs can fail to realize this:

¹ Bulliot, p. 326; Henry, pp. 368-9, 378, 402, 425; *Vendôme*, II, 310ff. For other testimonies to papal responsibility see Marquiset, p. 147; Belbuck, p. 54; De la Gorce, I, 19. I give fuller quotations in Appendix.

² See Appendix. The press-mark of this book in the British Museum is C. 38. c. 64.

³ Père Louys François names a few of these (pp. 182ff.).

and I cannot pass on here without a tribute to the number of such monographs, generally written by the local clergy, and to their value even for readers who, like myself, commonly dissent from many of their general conclusions: I ought, perhaps, to say their value *especially* for such dissentient readers. These authors, when in the fourteenth or fifteenth century they come to the *commendam* stage of their story, are unanimous in their judgement. Abbé Blanchot, in his history of a great house in Franche-Comté (Acey), discusses the system in terms all the more significant because his whole volume is strongly apologetic. He has come to 1545, when this abbey of Acey fell into *commendam*, more fortunate than most of its fellows in France, which had fallen sometimes a century and a half earlier. He reviews the whole movement, from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, and writes:

These famous abbeys, which formerly counted a hundred monks or more, now count but ten or twelve or less. Yet they still possess the same immense domains; the granges and vast buildings and long cloisters and lofty churches are still there, worn and rent by time, often ruined by wars or by the direct attacks of armed heretics.¹ To administer these domains and gather in the revenues, to repair these ruins, these few monks (and especially the head of the monastery) needed very great activity, with uncommon intelligence and business habits. How often such men must have been lacking, and recourse must have been had to administrators from outside the community! Even supposing that the monks had always been capable of administering their revenues and keeping up their ancient monasteries, these would have been a continual source of cares and of purely material preoccupations, with continual occasions of journeys and of relations with secular folk. Amid all these relations and journeys and cares, what would become of the spirit of contemplation and prayer and penitence, which is the soul of a religious community? For this reason again, how natural it must have seemed to choose from the world men who were suitable for those different works, and to restore the monks to their life of silence and their special mission of intercessors between God and the people! Finally, it often happened (I here use the very words of Horstius)² that they were bent to the earth under the weight of their possessions, and lost the taste of

¹ This is true only of the latter half of the period: until 1562, when the wars of religion broke out in France, the Protestants were not destroyers but sufferers, and by that time nearly all French abbeys were already *in commendam*.

² The first great editor of St Bernard's works.

divine things in their excesses of the table and in idleness. Must not episcopal authority then seem the natural means of bringing them back to that kind of celestial life which they had led in the days of old? Such was the manifold mission of these commendatory abbots.

But

the expectations of the Church were mistaken, and the remedy proved worse than the disease. Innocent V, as early as 1393, wrote how experience proved that, in benefices held *in commendam*, divine service and the care of souls were neglected, hospitality was not kept, the buildings were left to ruin and the temporal and spiritual rights of the founders were dying: therefore he revoked absolutely all commendatory abbacies. In 1464, Paul II deplored that, between Calixtus III and his own time, more than 500 French monasteries had fallen under *commendam*;¹ and he feared that all these changes would cause a great scandal in the Church... In 1473, Sixtus III, justly moved by the picture which was drawn for him [by a group of Cistercian prelates], decreed excommunication against the guilty commendatory Cistercian abbots.

And, after tracing the system down to 1742, Blanchot adds concerning the papal theory of *commendam*:

It was of no avail; and even the great weapon of excommunication, so formidable in the Middle Ages, remained powerless. Too many folk profited by these sacrilegious robberies; moreover, the lukewarm state into which the monks had fallen had done too much to alienate popular sympathy. When Protestantism broke out, the monasteries were definitely sacrificed. Kings, princes and nobles had been drawn into heresy and revolt by the bait of Church wealth; and it was absolutely necessary to remove this motive for defection. Therefore the popes ceased to protest and thus favoured the conflagration; in order to preserve the Faith, they abandoned the endowments. Thus the decay of monasticism was one of the causes of *commendam*, and *commendam* in turn, as deep calls unto deep, accelerated and gave greater gravity to that decay. As for the commendatory abbots, some, as we have said (among whom were several of those at Acey), employed the monastic revenues piously in accordance with the intentions of the Church. A great number, on the contrary, saw nothing in their abbey but a farm to be exploited, and employed their revenues in a profane, even when not criminal, manner which the pope's bulls had been far from anticipating. In short, this system was for our abbey the beginning of a long death-agony.²

¹ We must probably make the usual discount for medieval figures, even here from a pope's pen.

² Abbé Ch. Blanchot, *Hist. de N.-D. d'Acey*, pp. 163 ff.

Again, let us hear the historian of the Premonstratensian Order. After describing the abuses of the *commendam* system, Taiée adds:

All this explains only too clearly the cruel trials of Catholicism, which ought to have risen brilliant and pure above this foul ocean of misery; and also the decadence of the religious Orders; their diminution and their too short-lived revivals. Henceforward, their strength lay no longer in their constitutions, in their Rules, which were too often degraded or minimized; it lay mainly in their wealth, their political importance, and the protection of the civil powers; the merits and virtues either of the rank and file or of their rulers were now only accessory. The Premonstratensian Order, like the rest, had succumbed to this law of decadence and moral debasement. The Chapter General records which have been preserved furnish a long and incontestable array of proofs.¹

But the most eloquent modern voice raised against this vicious system is that of Montalembert, that champion of the monks whose book has influenced all later history, not only in France but throughout Europe also, and whose enthusiasm ran sometimes to impossible exaggerations. He writes, in the Introduction to his *Monks of the West* (Chapter VI):

The *commendam* system everywhere dealt a profound and deadly blow to the regular institutions; and, where Protestantism had not succeeded in breaking them down with violence, this infected them with a shameful and mortal poison. Catholic Germany was able to escape it from the Reformation onward. Belgium, thanks to her ancient political franchises, was able to impose even on its most powerful sovereigns, such as Charles V and Philip II, the obligation of saving her from this ignominy. Italy was less fortunate: there Monte Cassino, the cradle and focus of Benedictinism, underwent the disgrace of being counted among the sixteen abbeys which the scion of the Medicis, the future Leo X, possessed as playthings from his cradle upwards. There, again, the ancient and noble abbey of Farfa was given, about 1530, to a certain Napoleone Orsini, who made it the head-quarters of a band of brigands, and who, at their head, ravaged all Central Italy until he was killed in the attempt to abduct his own sister from the man who was betrothed to her. I am distressed to confess that such cases as this are to be found in more than one page of the history of those stormy times. But it was especially in France, after the Concordat between Leo X and Francis I, that

¹ Taiée, II, 7.

the evil reached its highest point. This Concordat granted to the king the right of appointment to every abbey and conventual priory in his kingdom: it did indeed prescribe that he should confer benefices on none but Religious, but that condition was always eluded or broken.¹ The persons invested with these benefices by the king, without the least interference from the community whose revenues they were to devour, had now only to obtain confirmation from the pope, who sent them bulls for their new dignity, thus intruding them into the rights of the former regularly-elected abbots, and reserving to a "claustral prior" the spiritual administration of a monastery that was now shorn of its most precious right. This servitude—or, to speak more truly, this foul open sore—lasted down to the Revolution. . . . Vainly did the standing scandal of these houses deprived of their natural heads, and exploited by strangers who never showed themselves but to squeeze the inhabitants, arouse unanimous and frequent protests: vainly did the parliaments of Blois and Paris, in common with most of the political and religious assemblies of the sixteenth century, demand a return to the ancient discipline: all was useless. The evil grew from day to day; the very notion of the pious and charitable destination of these glorious creations of our forefathers' faith was soon effaced from the minds both of those who dispensed these treasures of the past and of those who fed upon them. . . . The most ancient abbeys, the most illustrious in the annals of our Fatherland and our Church, were turned into an apanage for the kings' bastards or for their most unworthy favourites, and sometimes as the price of the shameful favours of a royal mistress. . . . It was for lighter trespasses than these, perhaps, that the angel of God's justice had laid upon one of the communities of the early Church that terrible sentence: *Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

The Vicomte d'Avenel compresses the story into two pithy sentences. "Officially, we date the confiscation of [French] Church property from the Revolution of 1789; but for the majority of them, spoliation came long before this. It dates from Francis I and was brought about by his Concordat with Leo X."²

¹ With the pope's connivance; a point which Montalembert ignores.

² *Hist. économique*, v, 72. See Appendix for this and other evidence. Yet in fact the responsibility may be traced one step farther back. Fyot writes (p. 55): "It would be an error to suppose that this *commendam* system dates only from the concordat of Francis I. The Pragmatic Sanction of Charles VII had already introduced this principle; and we find a striking instance in the nomination of Claude d'Inteville as twenty-seventh abbot of La Bussière at the end of the fifteenth century. He then enjoyed the combined revenues of five abbeys."

CHAPTER XXVI

IRREGULAR BOOK-KEEPING

IF this misappropriation of monastic funds, unlicensed or semi-licensed, was the main cause of financial decay, it found a natural concomitant in careless book-keeping or even in the total absence of regular accounts. The great abbeys, it is true, were originally, at least in the generality of cases, in the forefront of the business life of their own day. Gregory the Great may fairly be taken as the first monk-pope; for, even if it cannot be proved that he had formally taken the Benedictine vows, yet certainly he lived an essentially monastic life and was the great patron of monks. At the same time, he was the first pope to keep a thoroughly business-like Register; and in finance he grudged every wasted penny that might otherwise have gone to religion or to the poor. And when, after his lifetime, many abbeys came into possession of princely revenues, their revenues (except for occasional periods of gross misrule) were probably better administered than those of any prince in the Dark Ages. But, at the best, they laboured under great disadvantages—difficulties of communication, social disturbances, and scarcity of current coin. Moreover, their conservatism scarcely ever grasped the mathematical value of Arabic figures. Let any reader try, with Roman numerals, an ordinary multiplication or division sum of three digits on each side, and he will at once realize why medieval calculations were done with counters upon a board, marked out with such divisions that it resembled a chess-board (*échiquier, exchequer*).¹ Multiplication was thus carried on by a series of additions, and division by a series of subtractions. On a great scale, this accounts for the medieval powerlessness (and, by a natural consequence, frequent carelessness) in the face of really large numbers. The untrustworthiness of high figures, even

¹ Compare Cunningham, I, 235: a typical inventory of a fourteenth-century manor, where the lord possesses "unum scaccarium cum familia"—the *familia* being the different counters—unless, literally, chessboard and men.

when recorded by otherwise most trustworthy writers, is a commonplace among medieval students.¹ Not only did monastic chroniclers reckon the number of English parishes at a total of between 40,000 and 50,000 (sometimes, with apparently scrupulous exactitude, down to the last unit), but Edward III's Parliament actually imposed a tax calculated upon that basis, and therefore suicidally inadequate in its return, since the total of parishes was in fact less than 9000. Fitz-Ralph, Archbishop of Armagh, and formerly chancellor of Oxford, asserted his University to have had 30,000 students in the early fourteenth century; and this statement has often been used in proof of the frightful ravages of the Black Death. Those who thus argue have either not looked at the context, or have strangely ignored it: for Fitz-Ralph says nothing about the Black Death, and the figures he gives elsewhere, if correct, would go far to explode the theory that the decay of Church life was due to that plague. Fitz-Ralph's whole treatise is a violent indictment of the Friars, in whom he sees not saviours of society, but corrupters. In his own diocese of Armagh (he says) they absolve regularly about 2000 murderers or similar felons every year; moreover, they have so ruined Oxford University that men no longer send their sons thither, so that the numbers have sunk from a former 30,000 to a present 6000.² Similarly, writers often quote the alleged 57,734 deaths from that plague in Norwich, at a time when the wildest license of statistics has never enabled any modern advocate of those figures to calculate 50,000 as the total population of that city. Yet credulity on this subject survives even nowadays, whenever the figures go to support a thesis; and therefore it is necessary to emphasize the facts at this point. It will be noted that I have more than once warned my readers against taking such medieval calculations without discount; although, where no obvious bias comes in, we may often take them as roughly correct. This arithmetical difficulty, therefore, must be made allowance for in our study of monastic accounts; and the laxer habit of thought which it bred will explain what editors have frequently noted,

¹ See, for instance, Boos, III, 41 ff. He points out how nothing like a science of statistics was possible until the Italian merchants began to keep trustworthy numerical records.

² E. Browne, *Fasciculus*, II, 468; for fuller details see Appendix.

that the sums are constantly added up incorrectly, if only by a few pence.¹

This, then, must be said even of the greatest abbeys at the time when their social influence was strongest.

There is something pathetic in the sight of sovereigns like Charlemagne, or great abbots like Alard of Corbie, struggling in their manorial statutes to explain to their subordinates the necessity of the simplest accounts; the childish features which these explanations sometimes contain prove that they were addressed to minds very imperfectly prepared for their reception.²

Peetz, again, who is always inclined to take a favourable view of monastic conditions, admits that "monastic economy was at all times far from the ideal of systematic method" (p. 223). Moreover, monastic finance did not improve its methods during the centuries when layfolk were learning greater regularity; indeed, on the whole, the movement was rather retrograde. "The Church lost heavily by the mismanagement of prelates and abbots; and, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when the popes had arrogated to themselves the right of choosing prelates or abbots without consulting the canons or monks, then mal-administration became habitual."³ Canon Chapman speaks equally strongly with regard to the cathedral priory of Ely;⁴ and Mr Snape emphasizes the difficulties which even a medieval abbot must have found, under the then system, in attempting to get a clear idea of the financial position of his house. He points out that the system adopted, at the end of the Middle Ages, by the Earl of Northumberland, was definitely more logical and gave a clearer and more comprehensible statement of accounts.⁵

Yet this was one of the points on which, for centuries, popes and Councils had striven directly for reform, even if their practice had sometimes taken away the betterment which their

¹ See H. W. Saunders, *Rolls of Norwich Cathedral*, ch. vii. In one case the account gives £xxiv by mistake for xxivs.; and "the totals of sections are often very inaccurate while the 'summa totalis' is correct".

² Bloch, p. 103.

³ Molinier, *Obituaires*, p. 134.

⁴ *Sacrist Rolls*, 1, 1. See Appendix, and cf. H. W. Saunders.

⁵ *Eng. Mon. Finances*, pp. 66-70. "Both methods of government, it may be said, were despotisms; but the machinery whereby the secular despot was kept informed seems, to my mind, incontestably superior to that upon which his spiritual peer was dependent", even when we consider a conspicuously good abbey such as Eynsham; see Appendix.

theory demanded. The legatine ordinances for English monasteries in 1206 demand a quarterly statement of account.¹ The English Benedictine Chapter of 1225 decreed it. Gregory IX in 1238, and Innocent IV in 1253 insisted upon the frequent presentation of accounts in every monastery, great or small.² This was repeated by the English General Chapter of Benedictines in 1249 and again in 1277 (Pantin, I, 36, 84). So also the legate Othobon, at the end of the century. Full accounts were to be drawn up thrice a year; and, again, on April 1 and October 1, abbots were to explain in Chapter "the State of the House"; *i.e.* its financial position.

But Matthew Paris records that St Albans protested that once a year, about Michaelmas, was found to be enough for the presentation of accounts: and as by far the greater part of the obedientiaries' rolls which we possess are for the whole year, it is exceedingly doubtful whether the reforms of Gregory and Innocent were carried into effect. The obedientiaries and others in charge of the funds of the monasteries seem as a general rule to have been left practically unsupervised from one year's end to another; the annual auditing of accounts was apparently the only check upon them.

What a great monastery like St Albans was able to do in practically open defiance of papal injunctions, could be done furtively or by methods of passive resistance almost anywhere. The great English houses, to judge from the very considerable numbers of compotus rolls surviving among our cathedral archives, did generally secure detailed accounts from the several obedientiaries, and a general audit once a year. Yet even the greatest, as we shall see, were sometimes in default; and, when we take account of the number and general character of the defaulters in all the records, the results are startling. They explain how the canonist John of Ayton [1340] could condemn this failure to render yearly accounts as one of the worst defects of monasticism; defects which (he says) must endanger the monks' chances of heaven, and might well, even in this world, provoke God to give their vineyard over to other husbandmen.³

The best field for statistics of this kind is nearly always the *Register* of Odo Rigaldi, Archbishop of Rouen, which extends

¹ *E.H.R.* (1931), XLVI, 448.

² Snape, p. 67.

³ Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, II, 141.

from 1248 to 1269 and is unique as a complete diary of episcopal visitation over so long a period and so wide an area; for Odo occasionally visited not only his populous diocese but his large province. It is also specially valuable as covering a district more nearly allied to England, politically and socially, than any other on the Continent. Moreover, Odo had here the great advantage of an unusually zealous and efficient predecessor. As early as 1231 the Provincial Council of Rouen had noted that many of the smaller houses were in low water: that their accounts were not properly kept—*non computant*—and that some were even being suppressed as bankrupt (Mansi, XXIII, 213 ff.).

Odo visited, at different times, 162 houses, generally at intervals of three years or less. At seventy-four of these houses he found financial irregularities, nearly always in the shape of failure to keep proper accounts. At these seventy-four houses he had to complain 186 times; for there were a few which were found in default at almost every visit. These numbers are the more significant in face of the fact that twenty or thirty of these houses, at least, were tiny cells of two or three monks, not likely to be complained of, since their accounts must have been of the simplest description. But most significant of all is the record of some of the greatest houses, and under closest observation by this exceptionally acute, business-like and fearless prelate, whose administration earned him among his contemporaries the title of "Pattern of Good Life".

Let us take St-Ouen at Rouen, whose magnificent church is one of the glories of Gothic architecture. Here were from fifty to sixty monks, and their house was almost within a stone's throw of Odo's palace. In 1249 the convent seal was not properly kept: evidently it had been unlawfully used; hence "no small damage is said to have come to the abbey". In 1254 the kitchener is strictly commanded to make up his accounts at least fortnightly, and if possible weekly, and to prepare three copies in writing for himself, the abbot, and the audit committee—*electis a conventu ad hoc specialiter*—who also are to see that a general statement of the abbey's accounts is presented and audited at least thrice yearly. The seal is never to be used without great deliberation, especially for grants of life-pensions or life-leases, *i.e.* the matters which offered most temptation for

"graft". Two years later "there are too rare accounts of the [financial] state of the abbey; only once a year, and then only vaguely, whereas we had commanded that they should be drawn up at least thrice a year". In 1259 the kitchen accounts are still vague and irregular; the abbot is commanded to require terminal accounts from all the great obedientiaries, put into writing and audited. In 1264 the temporal affairs are "by no means satisfactory; for instance, with the abbot's sister and her husband master William, through whom the abbey is no little burdened for wine and wheat and food and oats and other things". The abbot himself had appropriated certain moneys "without reasonable cause; and thus we departed almost in impatience, seeing that we were unable to learn their state and that of the abbey as would have been fit and necessary". In 1265 "we could not learn what their receipts had been from the tributes of their appropriated churches": the archbishop had learned from his archdeacon that the monks had received 441 *livres* up to September 8: "but what they had received before or after that date they knew not, as they said." In 1266 "many things were being given to the abbot's sister, against the will of the convent, by the obedientiaries, for the sake of currying favour with the abbot; *item*, he had certain nephews who were believed to live upon the abbey's goods". Meanwhile "the almoner had slender revenues for almsgiving". The kitchen accounts were still made up only every three weeks, and the general accounts only once a year. Therefore Odo appointed a commission of ten monks, elected by the brethren themselves, to come and confer with him and concert a thorough reform "concerning the kitchen, and the general [financial] state of the abbey, and the abbot's indifference or negligence; for he seemed to care little for the profit of the abbey". Yet, two years later, we find Odo still complaining: "We commanded that accounts should be rendered more frequently than they had been, in the presence of some of the senior brethren, especially the items of the kitchen accounts." A few weeks afterwards, he set off with St Louis on the disastrous crusade, and his diary broke off.¹ The St-Ouen balances, from year to year, are significant. In 1249 they were just recovering from a disastrous fire. In 1254 they owed 2233*l*.

¹ *Regestrum*, pp. 57, 203, 364, 495, 525, 551, 611.

beyond their assets: in 1259, 2244*l.* The latest record (1265) reports debts as 4300*l.*, against which are only 2700*l.* in untrustworthy assets—in *debitis male solubilibus*.

We may next pass on to the aristocratic convent of St-Amand, half-way between the palace and St-Ouen. In 1248 the nuns "are in debt for 200 *livres*, and have an income of 1000*l.* The abbess renders no accounts to the convent; we commanded her to do so four times a year." In 1251, "We commanded the abbess, as we had done before, to give account twice or thrice in the year of receipts and expenses and the [financial] state of her abbey, in the presence of some sisters chosen by the convent." In 1254, "The abbess has not rendered accounts for the last three years. Their income is 1200*l.*; they owe 400*l.* by reason of a water-conduit which they have been compelled to construct anew." (It seems that Odo now discovers the income to be 200*l.* more than he had been told in 1248.) In 1258, "We commanded the abbess to cause accounts of daily expenses to be made more frequently, and that a general account should be rendered in presence of the senior sisters." In 1262, "The abbess had not made up her accounts, namely a balanced account, and therefore we could not fully learn the state of the abbey; and then we commanded her to consult her writings and to certify us of the state of the house. They had 376*l.* owing to them, and they owed 142*l.*" In 1264, "We commanded the abbess to render account more frequently than was her custom. They owed 500*l.*; something was owing to them in unsatisfactory [*male solubilibus*] debts, as they said." In 1267, "We commanded the abbess that, when she rendered her accounts, she should call in the prioress or sub-prioress, or some senior sister of the convent; *item*, that she should try to increase the almsgiving.... They owed 500*l.*" There the diary leaves them.¹

Thirdly, we will turn to Jumièges, one of the most imposing ruins in modern France, where the fifty-two monks had an income of 4300*l.* In 1250, "We ordained that certain of the brethren should be elected by the convent to audit every account of each obedientiary and of the abbot." In 1254 he repeated this injunction. In 1256, "We enjoined that two copies be made of every account, one to be kept by the convent and the other by

¹ *Regestrum*, pp. 15, 121, 201, 326, 456, 512, 588.

the abbot." In 1257, "We ordained that the revenues be recorded in writing." In 1262, "We commanded that they should cause the whole revenues of the abbey to be written in a register; the abbot made himself somewhat difficult in this matter. *Item*, we commanded the abbot to receive from the kitchener detailed accounts of his expenses, at least every six weeks, and that at the end of the year he should cause all the total expenses of that year to be recited and recorded in a single account." In 1264 he impatiently repeats his demand for more regular and frequent accounts. In 1266: "*Item*, we expressly commanded, as we had done on other occasions, that detailed accounts should be rendered by the obedientiaries more frequently than has been the custom; every six weeks at least." In 1267 Odo criticized the abbot for his sumptuous building without advice from the convent, and for his waste of the large balance (2000 *livres* and more) left by his predecessor, and for his unmonastic ostentation. In 1268 one of the monks formally put in a written accusation of forgery against the abbot, to the disadvantage of the convent; and Odo, pending a judicial enquiry, warned the abbot to dismiss his hawks and hounds, to obtain better business terms for his leases, and to behave with more monastic decency. In 1269, whereas hitherto the abbey budget had always been balanced, matters were now unsatisfactory: the cellarer owed 500 *livres* and the abbot 400; "2500 *livres* were due to them in untrustworthy debts"—*in debitis male solubilibus*.¹

The number of complaints made against these three great abbeys (for other houses, the average is less than three each) may well be due to the fact that they were so immediately under the archbishop's eye. But, on the other hand, they were no less directly under his finger; and these records testify to the difficulties which even the most pious and fearless prelates found in fighting the most inexcusable abuses. After those three, one of the greatest was St-Wandrille, where the thirty-nine monks had 4000*l.* a year. Here "the abbot does not render account four times a year as we commanded"; he makes leases without the brethren's knowledge, and there is no exact record of the abbey's debts: yet nothing special seems to have been done. On the

¹ *Regestrum*, pp. 102, 191, 265, 293, 455, 501, 547, 584, 606, 637. For further details see Appendix.

other hand, at St-Martin-de-Pontoise there were such serious irregularities in the accounts that Odo put in an auditor and a sworn coadjutor from outside.

In no other country do we find such full information as this until we come to the English records of the century preceding the Dissolution. The completest of these is the series of Lincoln visitations published by Professor A. Hamilton Thompson (Lincoln Record Society, vols. VII, XIV, XXI). The records extend, irregularly, from 1420 to 1449; most of the houses were visited four times during the period. In thirty-four of them the finance was seriously criticized, and in ten of these twice. One of the worst cases was that of the greatest abbey in the diocese, Peterborough. Here, in 1432, the obedientiaries did not render yearly accounts for audit. In 1437 the warden of the dependent cell of Oxney had long violated the custom of presenting weekly accounts: the bishop commanded him to present them at least monthly. The abbot was outspending his income by £100 a year, and had lent money to his brother. Some of the bailiffs had rendered no account for three years. Next visitation (1447) showed that the abbot himself had rendered no account for two years; the finances were in great disorder; the house was "heavily in debt", and one of the monks had illegally pawned "divers jewels. . . to wit a silver pyx for the Body of Christ,¹ and many others; and he hath not redeemed them, but converted the money thence received to his own uses", lending some of it out at usury for 20 per cent. interest. The abbot pleaded for mercy: "if the whole administration were taken from him, it would be a perpetual scandal to his name." The bishop compromised: the abbot must go and live at the cell of Oxney "with one honest monk as his chaplain, two gentlemen, three waiting-men and two grooms, honest and of good report and name, not lewd or of ill report or name." He must appear as little as possible at the abbey itself, and must have a committee of four to advise and control him financially. Thus he is to live on probation for the next two years; after which (as he promised) he will submit himself to the bishop's further ordina-

¹ In earlier days, as we shall see, there was the added scandal that such holy vessels were often pawned to Jews. See, for instance, the case of Tegernsee in 1228 (Pez, *Thes.* III, ii, 518).

tion. The gaps in the records leave us in doubt of the final result.

At Ramsey, another of the greatest houses in the diocese, in 1439, "for several years past no account has been furnished . . . so that there is fear that the house is bowed down with a grievous load of debt." At Humberstone Abbey (1440) a monk reports "that the abbot has never rendered an account in his time but once, and this was to master Thomas Warde at his visitation in that place. He [the abbot] confesses it." At Dorchester Abbey (1441): "Brother John Hakeburne, the prior, says that the abbot does not shew the state of the house, and makes no reckoning in common of his administration, nor has ever made reckoning." At Daventry (1442) the bishop deposed the prior from temporal administration in view of his "old age and impotence . . . and also for that, in all your time, you have rendered no account of the administration of the goods of your priory", with the result that the house was on the verge of ruin. Other great houses were among the transgressors: *e.g.* St Frideswide's Oxford, Crowland, Dunstable and Leicester.¹

We get very similar evidence from the visitations of Norwich diocese published by the Camden Society in 1888. This volume gives us one visitation of the diocese by Bishop Goldwell in 1492, and four by his successor (1514, 1520, 1526, 1532). The monastic visitations—as apart from colleges of secular priests—covered thirty-four houses, which were visited 137 times in all: four times each, on an average. In no less than fifty cases is it complained that accounts are not duly rendered for audit: generally, no accounts at all; a few times, it is only separate obedientiaries who are at fault. In sixteen cases, again, embezzlement is noted, or some similar financial irregularity; and in twelve cases the house had no proper inventory of its church ornaments and plate and valuables (*jocalia*). Moreover here also, as in Lincoln diocese, some of the greatest monasteries were among the worst in this respect.

At Norwich, in 1492 (thirty-eight monks): "The monastery jewels are being sold, and the sacristy is depleted to the extent of £66. 6s. 8d. . . . The sub-sacristan wastes his moneys prodigally and goes forth from the monastery by night and sits with the

¹ Further details in Appendix.

tailor and his wife beyond due time. . . . The pensions for [three] chantries are not paid." In 1514 "the juniors of the house have no knowledge of the incomings and emoluments, nor how they are spent. . . . The prior of St Leonard has given no accounts for the hospital of St Paul. . . . The obedientiaries have rendered no account for the last two years, and therefore the state of the monastery is not known." The prior was accused by two monks of having stolen the convent seal for the furtive sealing of a presentation to a church. "When the inventories are examined, the lost vessels of silver are never recalled." In 1520 the new inventory of "goods and jewels" was not yet completed. In 1526 the accounts were not being audited yearly, nor were obedientiaries and priors of the dependent cells rendering due account. The prior was accused of certain minor malversations, and "there is a report and a violent suspicion that the precentor has stolen Dr Flowerdew's money". In 1532 "the obedientiaries and the priors of the cells render no account of the fines which fall in during their tenure of office", and which would sometimes come to considerable sums. They did not lay up their documentary vouchers in the treasury, as they should; nor were letters patent enregistered, or the manumissions of serfs—another item which sometimes brought in considerable sums. "At times, jewels and precious stones are removed [*subtrahuntur*] from the vestry. . . . Dom William London is indebted to many persons."

The next house in importance was Walsingham priory, with from seventeen to twenty-eight brethren. In 1492, "The prior dares not to show the state of the house in the presence of all the brethren, as he ought to do, because then some of the brethren will disclose it outside." In 1514, "The prior has sold priory lands and has rendered no account of the money." The subprior testified "that the prior has never paid any money into the common chest since he was appointed"; another that he had never presented any accounts for audit. A third reports (and is corroborated by another) "that the prior often goes alone to St Mary's Chapel [where the famous shrine was] at dusk; and without knowledge of any of his brethren, he disposes at his own will of the money and jewels which he taketh thence". He has enriched two favoured servants at the expense of the monastery one of these "is worth 500 marks", and his wife is reputed to

be the prior's concubine. Another witness adds: "Let the lord bishop look at all the prior's cups, bowls and goblets." In 1514, again, the bishop commands "that the exchequer door be fitted with a double lock, one key to remain with the prior and the other with a senior brother chosen by the greater and saner part of the convent".¹ In 1520 the bishop found a serious quarrel in the monastery, and therefore prorogued his visit, but, in the end, omitted it for that turn. In 1526 there were no complaints on financial matters: nor, again, in 1532.

Westacre, with twenty brethren, was an exceptionally rich priory. In 1492 the finances are in the hands of the subprior and another, who have rendered no accounts, apparently, for three years, and have not paid into the treasury considerable sums which they have received. The subprior "liveth not as a Religious", but keeps a rabbit-farm and swans upon the priory waters, "which he gives to gentlefolk and others at his own will, and renders naught therefrom to the priory". In 1514, "The prior has rendered no account to the brethren for the last two years, until the coming of the lord bishop on his visitation. . . . The house is in debt, to many folk, but to whom we know not, and, I have heard say, for great sums." "The prior writeth in his account-roll that he hath paid the salaries of his brethren and other servants, and he payeth not." "He is in debt to the brethren for £20. . . we do not get the offerings from St Thomas's shrine." He has defrauded the Cambridge student of the greater part of his exhibition. In 1520, "The state of the house is unknown, for we have no account rendered." "The prior hath leased the tithes of Marham to one Barkham for 20 marks, to the damage of the monastery." "The priory is much burdened [with debt] both through the present prior and through his predecessors." In 1526 "the budget is not balanced yearly"—*arreragia domus non computantur annuatim*. The number of brethren has been cut down to fifteen, yet the house is £100 in debt. "The subprior dispenses the fragments of the feasts

¹ Langland, claiming to voice the thoughts of the man in the street, chimes in with monastic visitors and disciplinarians when he finds one of the crying evils of the day in this misappropriation to the monks' kinsfolk of endowments which were earmarked for the poor. "And monkes and moniales [*nuns*], that mendinauns sholden fynde [ought to support beggars] Ha[ve]n mad[e] [t]here kyn knyghtes, and knyght-fees purchased" (c. vi, 76).

[*conviviorum*] not for the benefit of the poor, but at his own will among his familiars, especially Waseney's wife and Isabella Seuster, whom the prior lately excluded." In 1532 the statutory founder's dole to the poor was being cut down by one half, and part of the business management was in the hands of a lay steward who "receives £4 per annum, and gives us no help": moreover, he "has offspring in the village, born out of wedlock and fed at the priory's expense".

St Benet's at Hulme had twenty-four monks in 1492. There were minor defalcations—£5. 8s. in all—on the part of the almoner and the sacristan. In 1514 "the abbot renders no account", and valuable plate was lost during the recent vacancy. In 1520 the abbot had no accounts to show, nor had he a business inventory; one of the obedientiaries was withholding customary payments to the brethren. In 1526 accounts are presented, but the bishop commands "that a superfluous multitude of hounds be not kept within the monastery, devouring the fragments from the tables which should be distributed for the benefit of the poor". In 1532 "the abbot's cellarer doth not render account before the seniors once a year, according to custom". The abbot's accounts show that the house is in debt, and "the master of the cellar, being examined, says that there is a superfluous number of hounds by which the alms which should be distributed to the poor are devoured".

Wymondham was another of the important houses, with eleven monks. In 1492 "the abbot has not made his accounts, nor shown them to the brethren, for many years". In 1514 "the abbot renders no account". In 1520 "the abbot rendereth no account of the state of the house in the presence of the senior brethren". In 1526 "the abbot and the convent of Langley withhold from the brethren 24 shillings which are due to them under the title of pensions", and the arrears have now accumulated for twenty-four years. In 1532 the abbey has a clean bill.

Similar evidence comes from Archbishop Warham's visitation of his diocese in 1511. Out of ten monastic houses visited, only five have a clean bill in the matter of accounts.¹

Our third source of statistical information is the series of Premonstratensian visitations carried out by Bishop Redman

¹ *E.H.R.* vi, 30ff. For details see Appendix.



WYMONDHAM ABBEY

(J. S. Cotman)

from 1472 to 1500. He was certainly a visitor of unusual competence; abbot of one of the greatest English Premonstratensian houses in 1459; Bishop of St Asaph (1471), of Exeter (1495) and finally of Ely (1501-5). Since 1478 he had also been Vicar for England of the Abbot-General at Prémontré. A testimony to his efficiency may be found in the much cleaner record of these Premonstratensian houses as compared with the far more numerous Benedictines and Augustinians, at any rate under Redman's rule. It exemplifies what we may infer from many other sources, that exempt houses were commonly either better or worse than the average of the non-exempt. The comparative independence of Benedictine houses is unquestioned, and it is even made a matter of boast by some historians of the Order. The late Dom Berlière, the greatest of their modern historians, while he deplored the fact, emphasized it as much as his colleagues. But the Premonstratensians, like other exempt Orders, were under far more centralized and autocratic government. When this machinery broke down, as it often did, then there was no remedy for loose discipline: the bishop was an outsider without any power of interference; the pope alone could intervene, and he was far too distant or too busy to help except in a small minority of cases. But when, as in this present case, the superior with very ample legal powers was also a man of zeal, determination, and long special experience, then we find excellent results in matters which, like financial business routine, can be verified and controlled with incomparably greater exactitude than the religious or moral state of the community.

In the whole of Redman's visitations we find record of only ten serious business irregularities, though the monasteries were very often in debt.¹ It is evident that he looked closely into the finances. Once, indeed, he takes the abbot's word as to the budget: "*ut dicit*" (II, 71). But elsewhere we see careful scrutiny: "*debita diligenter examinantes*" (II, 147): he takes care for the keeping of duplicate copies for reference (III, 69). Yet one important case shows how difficult it was even for a first-rate visitor to find out the truth.

Welbeck was one of the greatest English houses of the Order, with a community of twenty-four at its highest during this

¹ For particulars see Appendix.

period. It had ten appropriated parishes and two chapelries. In 1475 the abbot was William Burton. Redman warned him in 1478 "to be more careful for the reparation of his abbey, lest perchance it come to intolerable ruin". The abbot was still in debt, and his stores were low: he accounted for this by "great tribulations in defence of the rights and liberties of the abbey; [wherefore] he could not diminish the debt". There are indications (but no more than indications) of irregularities, which might suggest bad husbandry: *e.g.* "brethren [are forbidden to] roam about the woods, shooting arrows and hunting, or in any other disorderly fashion." In 1482 the bishop made a specially careful enquiry, taking evidence from all the brethren, one by one.

We found there, manifestly, the greatest irregularities and dishonesties, which are also a matter of evil report everywhere: especially that the abbot has been a very great dilapidator of all the possessions, not only in real property but also in furniture. He hath permitted tenements to fall to the earth for lack of repair; he hath leased to great folk the lands, woods and tithes of his abbey, many of them by letters obligatory, sealed with the conventual seal and with that of his own office, to the extreme confusion of the said abbey, against the will and the true consent of his brethren. Moreover, he hath pawned jewels and furniture of the abbey, and squandered them forthwith in his thoughtless improvidence, so that, at present, he had in his possession not one silver cup to put before Us at Our impending visitation, nor one bed or tablecloth or silver saltcellar, or any other furniture, to his great confusion. Moreover, the said abbey is in a state of great ruin and misery; for that he hath done no repairs during the time of his rule. In the woods and forests and brushwood he hath cut down and sold enormously, and left them thus without hedge or dyke, to their utter destruction. He hath sold and bartered all his oxen and sheep, in short, all his cattle. Divine service is often omitted and left undone from complete default of oil and wax and wine.¹ And we have found further in this our visitation that the said abbot liveth, and hath lived, in extreme incontinence, holding in embrace of fornication divers women, upon whom he hath begotten many children still living, who have been fed hitherto from the goods of the said abbey. He hath not paid to his brethren their clothes-money assigned to them by the General Chapter. He doth not shrink from play at tables and other games, with buffoons and such like persons, all day and night, without regard for his own dignity; and

¹ It will be noted that the only service which could be affected by want of wine would be that of Mass.

it is with such folk that he hath in many ways lost and wasted the abbey goods. By reason whereof, and for very many other causes which are dinned into Our ears from trustworthy sources, We, willing to procure a remedy, have exonerated the said abbot from his administration and his possession of temporal goods.

He was also to be banished to another Premonstratensian abbey, Barlings, at the bishop's pleasure. Yet in 1482 William Burton still heads the visitation list at Welbeck as abbot! In 1488 there is another, John Ackaster, whom the bishop praises warmly for having wiped off £200 of debt and restored the abbey finances by prudent government. Yet Redman still has to forbid hunting and gambling to the brethren.

Such were the difficulties, then, of a visitor exceptional in the frequency of his visits and in qualifications for his office. Even Redman might at times have been compelled to echo the despairing complaint of that French emissary of the General Chapter who examined the English Cluniac houses in 1279.

When the abbot [of Cluny] was in England, [the prior of Wenlock] told him that the house owed 1200 marks, although he had now been prior for six years; to me, at Bermondsey, he said that it owed 800 marks. When I visited the priory in his absence (for he had crossed the sea) I could not find from the monks of his house, nor by those concerned, that the priory owed [even] 500 marks; so that it is almost or quite impossible to learn the truth from English monks.¹

Yet, in 1428, the papal commission which sat to reform the great mother-abbey of Cluny found the accountancy so defective that the abbey suffered "great detriment and loss", and "rancours, murmurs and scandals had sometimes arisen".²

We meet constantly with individual cases of financial irregularity in monastic records of every kind, and, at the same time, of the monks' *vis inertiae* in the face of most visitors. Somewhere about A.D. 1340, Bishop Richard de Bury called upon the monks of Durham to show him their accounts. He was their statutory visitor, and, by law, the accounts ought to have been ready for him at any time. He requested to see them on

¹ Duckett, *Chapters and Records*, II, 138-9. By strict examination, he finally discovered that the debt was more than 1800 marks. The prior "sells whatsoever he can sell, and alienates all that he can" trying to get enough money to be elected bishop of Rochester. The story of his fictitious accounts, and his tale of the loss of 3400 head of cattle which had never existed, etc., fills the whole of p. 138.

² *Rev. bénéd.* (1923), xxxv, 176, 180.

February 2; on Trinity Monday they were not yet forthcoming; again he demanded them vainly on August 24. They then promised the accounts, in response to his vigorous representations, within three days: but they broke their word, and he sent them an ultimatum for September 30. After this the record breaks off; and it is quite possible that he never got them.¹ Again, Abbot Hugh of St-Riquier, in 1457, had reigned at that rich abbey for forty-six years without scandal, yet "in his time no verified accounts had been rendered either to the brethren or to any man"; therefore his successor's first business was to arrange for the keeping and auditing of accounts.²

Nor was it only by passive resistance that adequate financial management was defied: the sins of commission perhaps equalled those of omission. Benedict XII, in his reforming statutes of 1336, devotes a whole long chapter (xxii) to the prohibition of the "Fictitious and fraudulent contracts" practised by monks; mainly consisting of what we now call "graft" under cover of fictitious payment of a feigned debt. More than a century earlier, Cardinal Jacques de Vitry tells of two boys, brothers, of whom one was put into a monastery and the other remained in the world. "When they came to years of discretion, the cloisterer knew more quibbles and frauds, and was far more malicious, than he who remained in the world."³ For, where so much laxity prevailed, further laxities were naturally excused as mere peccadilloes; and, in this field again, popes sometimes withdrew with their left hand what their right hand had granted. Alexander IV (1254-61) "emphatically commanded the Dean of St-Pierre at Lille to give out from the pulpit that, under pain of excommunication, all debtors of the abbey [of St-Bavonde-Gand] must declare, before a certain day, the sums which they owed, and to give notice of any abbey goods which might be in their possession". On the other hand, when the bishop called upon the abbey to show its accounts, the same pope "virtually forbade him to demand that the abbey should declare to him the state of its fortune".⁴

¹ *Reg. Dunelm*, R.S. iv, 399.

² *Prestre*, p. 50.

³ *Exempla* (1878), p. 19. We must make allowance, of course, for the cardinal's satire.

⁴ Van Lokeren, pt. I, pp. 99, 100. To the papal attitude towards the restoration of monastic alienations I come in a later chapter.

I cannot conclude this chapter without emphasizing its relevance to a serious question raised by so great an authority as the late Dom Berlière. He argues that, in view of the constitutional independence of Benedictine houses, we cannot reason from one abbey to another; therefore "we must study these monasteries separately, and draw no general conclusions but from the repetition and frequency of the same phenomena".¹ That is excellent advice to the student of the original records, but how about the public of intelligent readers to whom he is attempting to convey his conclusions? Are they to take his mere word for it, that such and such a phenomenon occurs "frequently" or "infrequently"? And, again, however implicitly they may trust him, how can they be sure of the exact sense which he attaches to these words "frequent" or "infrequent"? For, on any important subject, it is plainly absurd for him to attempt to lay upon the table, as vouchers, all the phenomena he has observed. If we are to proceed only after an exhaustive examination and balancing of all the individual cases, many lifetimes would be needed for the study of each separate chapter in monastic life. Were the typical superiors those of whose untrustworthiness in business matters the Cluniac visitor complained, or are we to take Bury St Edmunds for our type? And, at Bury itself, are we to take Abbot Hugh or his immediate successor Abbot Samson? Under Hugh (Jocelin tells us) everything had gone to rack and ruin; yet when the king sent his almoner to make enquiry at the abbey,

The prior rose from his seat, and, speaking as one for all of us, said that the abbey was in a good state. . . and that business matters were well and discreetly treated: yet we were to some small extent burdened with debt like the rest of our neighbours, but there was no debt that was grievous unto us. [But I, Jocelin, who was then a novice, said to my master Samson, afterwards abbot,] "What do I hear? Why art thou silent, thou who seest and hearest these things: thou who art a simple monk, and dost not covet to be an obedientiary, and fearest God more than man?" But he answered and said, "My son, the child that hath newly been burnt feareth the fire; so standeth it with me and with many others."

Yet, when that same Samson was abbot, everything went upon wheels in that great abbey and its estates; domesday-books and

¹ See the second volume of this present work, p. 347.

inventories were drawn up, and "every week he audited the accounts of his household expenses, not through a substitute but in his own person, a thing which his predecessor would never do".¹ How are we to strike an average between those two cases at one and the same abbey?

In this difficulty it is of the greatest importance that the question should, every now and then, be capable of statistical exposition. And here, in this matter of financial regularity, we have statistics, generally clear-cut and indisputable, from three of the most significant dioceses in Europe, and from one of the most important Orders. Over all that time and space—for I must here again point out how much the value of the evidence is increased by its uniformity in spite of differences in time and place—we can tabulate quite clearly "the repetition and frequency of the same phenomena"; and the reader may now judge for himself how far those phenomena go to explain the Dissolution in England.

Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, there may be practically conclusive evidence even apart from this kind of plain statistics. We may often judge a phenomenon, if not with absolute confidence at least with very high probability, by the attitude of contemporaries towards it. If any feature of conduct is universally blamed, yet constantly condoned by the authorities, we naturally conclude that it was so frequent as to have won its way to practical immunity. In this present case, that sidelight entirely corroborates the direct light cast by tabular statistics. Though all men saw that financial irregularities were sapping monastic life not only on the material side but also on the moral and religious, yet a pope might protect them, and very few disciplinarians had the power or the will to fight the evil through such penalties as it deserved.

In this respect, monastic finance does not compare favourably with that of kings and nobles or civic corporations. Business probity always depends to a great extent upon business vouchers and safeguards; and we, who struggle to imagine these men in their own surroundings, so different from ours, must bear in mind that an age of rudimentary business methods is likely to be an age of rudimentary business regularity. The monk's mai-

¹ *Chronica*, C.S. pp. 3, 21, 31.

guides were conscience and custom; and these did not raise him above the temptations of his station except in days or places of exceptional religious fervour. At ordinary times, it would have been better for him to have lived under civic discipline than under that of distant and infrequent General Chapters, working through visitors who were themselves not always free from the faults they were sent to correct, nor were compelled by their superiors to exercise that compulsion which, in theory, they wielded for the amendment of their inferiors. The Religious, in this respect, had a good deal to learn from the world.

Lessons in common financial responsibility had been early forced on the burghers everywhere by the legal doctrine that the whole body might be held responsible for the debt of one of its members, while each member on his part was answerable for the faults of his fellows, whether singly or collectively. Thus when Norwich failed in paying debts due to the King in 1286, the sheriff of Norfolk was ordered to enter the liberty and distrain twelve of the richer and more discreet persons of the community; and when the rent of Southampton was in arrears, one of its burgesses was thrown into the Fleet in London. Under such a system as this the ordinary interest of citizens in questions of taxation and expenditure was greatly quickened.¹

¹ *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, Mrs J. R. Green, I, 140.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ABBOT'S RESPONSIBILITY

WE see, therefore, that there is little external control over the monk's expenditure of his rich revenues; conscience and custom are here his main guides. We can scarcely wonder that, except at places and times of exceptional religious fervour, his own comfort and personal security seemed to him the first charge upon his income, and that the average monk lived an easier and quieter life than he would have enjoyed amid the economic, social and military struggles of the world outside. That is what we might anticipate; it is what contemporaries give us as their own general verdict, and what we shall find when we now set ourselves to study the daily life in detail.

We shall see this best by tracing first, as briefly as possible, the financial fortunes of two great abbeys for which we have unusually full information: one Continental and one English.

St-Trond was one of the three richest abbeys in what we now call Belgium: the earliest chronicle of the abbey was one of the first printed by the Benedictines of St-Maur; it is unusually full and interesting.¹ The author, Rodulf, was himself abbot and restorer of the house's fortunes; he died in 1138: his frankness is as remarkable as his literary ability. In so far as space allows, I give the story in his own words.

The relics of St-Trond were laid in his abbey church, in a shrine adorned with gold and silver, as early as 770 at least. They seem to have survived the ravages of the pirates; for in the last years of good Abbot Gontram (1034-55) "the saint's tomb began to shine forth with most frequent miracles; but he strove with all his might to conceal them. For, conceiving in his wise breast that which was destined to come to pass, he was wont to say that signs are given not for believers but for unbelievers". His successor, Adelard II, reversed this wise policy, and encouraged the concourse of worshippers, with the happiest results from his own point of view. For crowds came sometimes even

¹ D'Achery, *Spicilegium* (1666), vol. vii; *M.G.H. Scriptores*, vol. x.

on ordinary days, while at great festivals they bivouacked round the abbey in extemporized leafy booths like the tents of a besieging army, nobles and freemen and rustics.

What shall I say of the altar-oblations? To say nothing of the animals—palfreys and oxen and cows, boars, rams and sheep, which were offered in incredible multitudes—there were also flax and wax, loaves, cheeses, beyond all weight and number; and silver wire beyond all price. As to money, even at sundown the heap of coin in the cloister was scarcely completed, and very many guardians were wearied with receiving them and laying them in store; men who had been suffered to do nought else during the whole long day... Our abbey was thus famed for its overflowing riches even beyond the limits of the Roman empire. For, if I may tell the truth even to men unwilling to believe, if this wealth were counted it would be found that the fruits of that one altar far exceeded all the rest of the abbey's revenues either then or now; and this not for one or two years only, but during the whole lifetime of this abbot Adelard.

He, as a lover of magnificence, set himself to rebuild the abbey church on a grand scale,

with most beautiful workmanship, but at inestimable expense. It was wonderful to see, and incredible to tell, from how far men came, and in what multitudes, and with what zeal and joy they ceased not to bring stone, lime, sand, wood and all necessities for the work, both by night and day, freely and without price in their own waggons and chariots... Nor less did [the abbot] study faithfully to build churches throughout the abbey territories, and to buy the estates and farms of noble folk, from the offerings at the altar [of St-Trond].

Two among these many acquisitions cost 800 marks, which we may think of as £24,000 nowadays. But here he overreached himself: he was compelled "to sell, among other things, a golden chalice of great weight, and the golden frontispiece of St-Trond's altar, and to pledge certain mills, which death prevented him from redeeming". Moreover, the turbulence of the times, and the rapacity of princely tax-collectors lost him so much that

although the weekly sum of offerings at the altar might be reckoned at 100 pounds, beyond what was purloined here and there by the bold fraudulence of the guardians and the wasteful rapacity of greedy magistrates, yet among so many cares and expenses the abbot was often seen to be in want; and his want was the more intolerable because no man would give him credit... He gave to his own

[kinsfolk] many fiefs; and, trusting to the altar-offerings, he neither left nor founded anything to supply either the church lamps or the other necessities of the abbey.

Therefore his grey hairs went down sadly to the grave (1082) after twenty-seven years of rule.

Abbot Rodulf, who had finally inherited many of the consequences of this chequered reign, proceeds now to rehearse them.

[Under this Adelard] the miracles and virtues of St-Trond began to be a matter not so much of fear and reverence as of ostentation and popular glory. For his tomb was frequented by an infinite concourse of pilgrims, and, not only every day but every hour of the day, multitude came upon multitude; and, even at midnight, the place rang with the turmoil of comers and goers. Whether the brethren would or would not, these folk burst into every corner of the cloister, the more especially because the water of our well, which still exists, was said to have healing virtues when drunk in the name of the Saint,¹ so that sick folk were cured there: indeed, lepers are said sometimes to have been cured by washing from that water. What need is there of many words? The church, the choir, the sanctuary, the cloister and cloister-garth were never free from this crowd by night or by day; and the continual tumult of their noise was a great vexation, and an impediment of orderly life to old men wont and willing to serve God in quiet and silence.² Yet the younger brethren, to whom the Rule was wearisome and discipline hateful, were delighted at first by this almost necessity for transgressing the commands of the Rule our Mistress; so, in process of time, through this so frequent custom of multitudinous pilgrimages, they at length began, with brazen forehead, to do in all things after their own pleasure. They abusively neglected the difference between one place and another, and the changes of hours between regular and irregular. They rejected the rebukes of their elders with indignant contempt. Sometimes they rebelled in indecent wantonness against the abbot himself; and (a thing which is the first root and seed of utter ruin in a monk's soul, and the supreme and almost inevitably destructive extermination of the Order) they began meanwhile to burn with zeal for illicit property, and not even to abstain moderately from intercourse with worldly folk, and to dare that which was unseemly. Hence some became unbridled, recalling proudly the nobility of their

¹ It is noteworthy that Rodulf, writing in about 1130 at latest, speaks of all this as past. In the story of his own rule (1107-38) with which the chronicle concludes, pilgrims and relics are scarcely mentioned.

² Rodulf has emphasized, elsewhere, the peace and order which prevailed in the monastery under Gontram's modest and unostentatious rule.

blood; then, enticed by flatterers, they were kindled by the stealthily whispered, or even openly expressed suggestion of that same pomp. Then the impunity of these [brethren of noble birth] rendered others, ignoble both in mind and in race, the more audacious in committing the same or greater offences, and the more impatient if by chance they found themselves deceived, and punished by the merited judgement of regular discipline. And, so to speak, one more slippery slope led to this fatal gulf into which the abbey was destined to fall: to wit, that death took daily from us those holy and religious men who had been fostered under the discipline of Abbot Gontram; and, the more these men decreased, the more freely did presumption and indiscipline grow: for the very few who still survived lived sorrowfully for themselves alone, not daring to murmur at the insolence of the young. Why should I hold my peace in shame and for reverence of our Order? The farther these pilgrims spread the story of the glorious renown of St-Trond's miracles, the more our brethren's worldliness was noised abroad, by the lightness of their manners and their abusive indiscipline. For all those of our Order who wished to go to ruin found ample opportunity, as I have said, both from the multitude of pilgrims that came and went, and from the vast extent of our monastery buildings which were being restored from their decay.

And, seeing that St Benedict testifies that all the brethren's faults have regard to the abbot, therefore that great and pitiful saint, as monitor of our salvation, stretched forth his hand to smite abbot Adelard, because he, far more remiss than the need of souls required, stood not forward to oppose this great peril of souls and to avert the extermination of God's imminent fury.¹ So the Lord smote him, and deprived him of his senses, in order to smite the brethren with terror even in the midst of those signs and miracles wherewith, through the blessed Trond, He daily admonished our monks to amend their lives, and in order to make them understand through terror that their sins had caused the madness of this man by whose leadership they ought to be governed, imitating their [the saints'] footsteps.² So he was led

¹ In view of the fact that in Innocent III's decree of 1215 against heresy, attempts are now made to limit the word *exterminare* to its earlier classical sense of "banishment", it is important to notice how Rodulf twice in consecutive pages uses it in the sense of "destruction". Both meanings are about equally common in medieval writers, unless indeed the latter is the more frequent. In the Vulgate (and this must have gone far to influence Innocent and his Council) verb and noun occur 39 times, and in only 3 cases are they clearly limited to "banishment". Indeed the "Destroyer" of 1 Cor. x, 10 and Rev. ix, 11 (Bunyan's Apollyon) is in the Vulgate *Exterminator*, *Exterminans*.

² The Latin is difficult to construe here, but the general sense is plain enough.

to the abbey of St-Laurent at Liége; and when, after the custom of crazy folk, he had spent many days there in the crypt of the blessed Mary ever Virgin, he at last earned his cure by her intercession at the tomb of bishop Wolbodo. Yet, even thus, the wicked blindness of our monks would not see how pitifully and cautiously God's misericord was holding out the hand of mercy to them, admonishing the whole body of its peril by this chastisement of its head: nay, even more impetuously and irrevocably did they rush forward to all their desires and pleasures, seizing their opportunity (as I have already said) from the multitude of pilgrims that buzzed around them, and from the vast extent of the abbey. Moreover, if perchance any man lacked anything that he desired, each was supplied to the very full of his itching by those most lavish offerings at the Saint's tomb; for they cared not to withhold their guilty hands from so great a sacrilege. These things could not be altogether hidden from our masters, to wit the bishops of Metz and Liége.

The result was an interference which Rodulf deplotes as mischievous, culminating in the refusal of the brethren's own choice after Adelard's death, and the forcing of an outsider upon the abbey. Yet he admits that the bishops had found it only too easy to base this interference upon "the evil fame of the electors" which "by God's just judgement" frustrated their wishes. He admits also that the bishops' choice (Lanzo, Abbot of St-Vincent-de-Metz) was "a religious man, and of excellent name among the Religious". But much bad blood was caused by the dispersion of many of the monks among other houses, and, to add to this, after three years of Lanzo's rule the new abbey buildings were burned to the ground. Here Rodulf cannot help again seeing

the hidden judgement of God, whereby our abbey was the only building in the whole town which was set afire by a single cottage from a great distance; for a globe of blazing straw, soaring high to heaven from the fire of this flame-belching cottage, is said to have been clearly seen, at last, to have fallen upon a stork's nest in that one of the two towers which adjoins the south-eastern apse (1085).

Then came political troubles. "Pope Hildebrand, who is also called Gregory VII, and the Roman emperor Henry IV, who died at Liége as he fled from his son's persecution, were miserably distracting the Empire and Papacy with most grievous dissensions"; and one of the banished monks, Luipo, persuaded the emperor to substitute him as abbot, deposing Lanzo. This

was fatal; it swept the monks into that vortex of civil war, and the great tower of the abbot became thenceforward a military post. A garrison came in, and plundered the abbey for their own comfort; "with the precious hangings and tapestries which our church possessed in abundance...and with other church furniture they lived a life of most abusive luxury". "Moreover that strongly fortified tower of the abbey stood out in the midst of the town like a citadel of mountainous height, such as no abbey ought then to have possessed, but only some most warlike city or royal castle." Therefore

the bishop of Liège, provoked by these and numberless other presumptions of our brethren, at last brought up his army to besiege what was no longer an abbey tower but a den of thieves...Alas! how much blood was shed!...For those who were on the tower, with all kinds of defence, crushed their enemies most miserably from afar and near: nay, even some of the monks, who lived with us long afterwards, eagerly girded themselves to this necessary defence. It was piteous to behold the holy image of God, the blessed Crucifix, hanging from the tower windows, and the multitude of assailants shooting arrows at the shrine of St Eucherius which was displayed [in our defence].

The church itself was stormed at last, and the victors

leaping even upon the altars, wrought a horrible sacrifice. Alas! the House of God witnessed such bloody slaughter that many heaps were made here and there of dismembered corpses; and, while bowels gushed forth at the point of the insatiably raging sword, not only the walls and pavement were splashed with blood but even the altars of Saints Trond and Eucherius were polluted with the filth of torn intestines...O holy Trond, was it this that thy miracles portended, which were so often wrought of old at thy tomb?

This victory of the Imperialists consolidated Luipo's power as abbot. Rodulf, who claims not vainly to be aiming at real impartiality, admits that the man had some good qualities as administrator, if only he had entered into the sheepfold by the true door. He was a hard taskmaster to the abbey peasants; but though

certain temporal matters did indeed prosper in his hands, yet, as to keeping or amending Religion and the ancient quality of monastic manners, he commanded neither fear nor any respect among the

brethren... One day in harvest-time, coming in from the field sore heated and wearied, having drunk much at eventide with those of his household, and lain down upon his bed in much jollity and good health, he was found at midnight with all his limbs well-nigh dead, so that he could neither speak nor move. He waxed worse and worse until, lingering scarce until Prime, he died at last with the sunrise, unconfessed, unanointed, and unaneled.

The abbey buildings were not yet restored; "but the brethren dwelt in a sort of huts, here and there, around the burnt-out walls". Duke Godfrey of Bouillon, the future crusading hero and king of Jerusalem, took the abbey now into his hands; and a protégé of his, Herimann, was put into the abbacy. Meanwhile the civil wars continued, with their disastrous repercussions upon a prize so well worth conquering and reconquering as this princely abbey. Not until 1099 did a worthy abbot come in the person of Theodoric; the seventeen years since Adelard's death had witnessed four successive rivals "contending for the abbey, and never suffering each other to hold it for any certain time". Three years later, Theodoric had so far rebuilt the ruined church that the crypt could be solemnly consecrated; then the choir was restored, and the rest attacked, and "with increase of joy Religion also began to increase, and the number of brethren to increase a little". Yet still they lived in great discomfort and poverty, having in refectory

little windows [for each] in the walls, diligently locked, wherein they laid their napkins and knives and goblets and whatsoever [food] they had left from the table; for they had not wherewith to succour their needs but from that substance which either superabounded or which they had denied to their own mouths. Nothing, or very little, was given in the way of alms.

But Theodoric was determined to restore the abbey: and

since he preached with charm and eloquence at Easter or Whitsuntide to the people, he often drew from them ten or twelve marks, more or less, to help the rebuilding of the abbey... For alms to the poor which had altogether ceased, he provided six wheaten loaves to be given daily... Such brethren as he found he fostered kindly, and added [to our number] as many and whom he could, suffering much from those whom he was compelled to receive when they came to him from other monasteries through the necessity of a smaller

number. For he was oftentimes inveighed against by our citizens, who always spake evil against us because only eight or ten brethren were consuming the revenues of so great an abbey, not noting, nor willing to consider in the inveterate malice of their blindness, to what poverty the abbey had fallen by reason of their own mad inconstancy and the contention of abbot against abbot through their factions, and the sums that must be spent in repairing the minster, the cloister, and their appurtenances. So the abbot, compelled, I say, by this necessity of evil-speakers and malignant detractors, having no other monks of his own, and receiving unknown monks that came from elsewhere, frequently suffered many losses and injuries. For such folk would keep no order; and, when their nakedness had been clothed and their hunger appeased, they either dwelt among us most frowardly or fled at length with loss and injury and backbiting to us. I myself saw, within the space of five or six years, seventeen of this sort steal away from us after we had clothed them with new garments from the soles of their feet to the crown of their head.

Under these difficulties and constant attacks, both open and secret, from a rival for the abbacy and from political partisans, Theodoric ruled until 1107. Then, again, this rich prize (for the possessions in themselves were enormous) was tossed like a shuttlecock for nine months between conflicting monastic and political factions, until at last, by regular canonical election, the monks chose this Rodulf to whom we owe one of the most intimate of monastic chronicles. He was born of "parents plebeian but most Christian, servants of the abbey, serving the hospitality and refection of the poor with indefatigable zeal, and leading their married life without reproach or any slur upon their Christianity". The boy was sent to school at Liège, where he had already distinguished himself at the age of eighteen; and he seriously considered entering a great monastery at Aachen, until "having heard the Rule read, he saw that the brethren observed it in very few respects". Journeying further, he happened to stay at St-Trond, where Theodoric detained him to teach the boys, "scarce able to decline the first declension". For the monastery was still in low water, with only ten monks and four boys, who "were only guests, and departed soon afterwards". Two years later the prior died, and Rodulf was elected in his place. There he distinguished himself by diligence in writing and by attempts to reform the discipline, beginning with dress

and ordinary liturgical reverence. For the monks were helped out in choir by secular priests, some of whom

rushed to High Mass without any reverence, some shamefully clad in lay costume, open both before and behind, and only very few in mere black cassocks without alb or surplice.... During the performance of Christ's secret mysteries, two or three of these clergy sat round one or two of our brethren in the choir itself, or surrounded them singly, and thus amid idle words and laughter and jests they all said the rest of Mass together.

Again, he fought manfully to "exterminate the vice of *proprietas*", and to bring order into the finances. He raised the number of monks from seventeen or eighteen to thirty-five at lowest, and once to thirty-nine. Four books, one third of the whole Chronicle, are devoted by the continuator to these reforms and the abbot's building activities, and to his formal statutory organization of the brethren's comforts, a subject on which I shall quote his foundations at length in my next volume. It is remarkable (and to this I must return later) that Rodulf was able to do all this by mere businesslike management of the abbey estates, quite apart from those enormous sums which had come in under Adelard from the relics. For (adds the continuator in the last sentence but one of his story) "the fruits of the altar at St-Trond's tomb, which of old had been inestimable, and wherefrom the abbey in ancient times was wont to repair all its misfortunes, produce in these present days scarce enough to defray the lamps that our church needs".

The rest of the St-Trond story may be found in a monograph by Professor H. Pirenne, the *doyen* of Belgian historians.¹

Rodulf's reforms kept the abbey sound until 1193: but then again it went fast downhill. One scandalous abbot was deposed; two others resigned; under a fourth, there was open mutiny. This moral decay was accompanied, as in so many other cases, by financial embarrassment, which Pirenne rightly traces to three main sources. First, society was changing rapidly in the more populous parts of Europe, and commerce was growing at the expense of agriculture. Secondly, a rich monastery was always exposed to the encroachments and depredations of lawless neighbours. Thirdly, monastic records themselves bear witness

¹ *Le livre de l'abbé Guillaume de Ryckel* (Brussels, 1896).

to great mismanagement on the monks' part. Four of the greatest Belgian monasteries were, at this very time, in much the same straits as St-Trond.

The monks fell back upon one favourite remedy, that of relics and miracles. In old days, it had been sufficient to send the house's best relics round the country with an escort of monks in solemn procession; but that resource was already somewhat threadbare in these early years of the thirteenth century. Then a wandering English monk, drifting to St-Trond, "contrived a trick whereby we might free our abbey from its burden of debts". He engineered a few false miracles; but these, again, were less efficacious than they might have been a century earlier. There remained only one refuge, the Jewish and Lombard usurers. In three years, one of the abbots borrowed 2500*l. tournois* [Let us say, the equivalent of £25,000 in modern sterling currency]: four years later, the unpaid interest had brought this debt to nearly double: at his death, the monastery owed [£47,200]. It was Jocelin of Brakelond's story over again: the abbot was "wrapt in his warm flannels and delusions" while the debts grew from a snowball to an avalanche; only here, at St-Trond, there was in the house no Samson to set things straight. But a saviour must be sought somewhere; and the monks found him in Willem van Ryckel, a secular priest, who held a rectory at Aix-la-Chapelle and was secretary to the king of the Romans, William of Holland. In eight days (or, possibly, even in three) Willem became novice, monk, and abbot at St-Trond. He lost no time in procuring papal confirmation; then he set off to deal directly with Innocent IV at Lyons. From him he soon procured a bull decreeing, first, that St-Trond should be liable only for the capital of the debts contracted; and, secondly, that, even of these capital debts, all might be repudiated which had not been contracted "for the common profit of the monastery".¹ Here was a real man of business; and he has left us a private book very curious in its likeness and unlikeness to that of his contemporary Odo Rigaldi. On July 20, 1260, for instance, Willem's note runs, "I was reckoning up in my orchard with Giles my steward." That same day, Odo tells

¹ Compare John of Ayont in Lyndwood's *Provinciale* (ed. 1679), part II, p. 150.

us that he slept at Rochester on his way back from a political mission to Henry III with which St Louis had entrusted him. From Odo we get no hint whatever of the nature of this mission; he is only concerned to record his spiritual dealings with his own flock. Willem, on the other hand, gives us no hint of any reformation at his monastery *in spiritualibus*. Yet he was evidently a lover of decency; under his successor, the monastery again began to boast its "men of learning". That, however, we need to seek in the chronicle; the abbot's book speaks only of worldly business. It contains (1) receipts and expenses in all sorts of directions; (2) a terrier, or survey of the eighteen different manors which the abbey still possessed; (3) an account of the abbot's demesne, or home-farm system; (4) a record of the debts paid off; (5) a list of trespasses and encroachments which must in future be resisted, if possible; (6) an account of the convent lawsuits; (7) a list of investments, mainly in land and house-property; and, with all this, many more business notes which would be difficult to classify. We find that, after long negotiations, after many journeys to Lyons, where the pope still held his court, after longer journeys to Genoa and Milan, where the bankers lived, and after disbursing £10,000 for these and other expenses—the main item, no doubt, being that of fees at the papal curia—Willem finally got judgement for the reduction of the debts to [£34,000] payable in ten yearly instalments. This he paid so punctually and successfully that the extra charges for interest amounted to less than [£1000]. Thus, in ten years, he had liquidated the whole of the abbey debt; a very remarkable feat, even when we take into account a consideration to which I shall come in my next chapter: the papal policy of favouring repudiation in the case of abbey debts. When William died (1272) "the abbey was again one of the great ecclesiastical capitalists of the district. As early as 1255, it had a yearly income of [3000 bushels] of rye, and [£5000 sterling] in money". This income must have been still greater at William's death; and the abbey seems never again to have fallen into bankruptcy.

Let us now come, much more briefly, to one of our greatest English monasteries, St Albans. Here, as at St-Trond, the facts themselves are not so exceptional as the frankness with which the great chronicler, Matthew Paris, tells the story until his own

death in 1259.¹ Abbot Richard (d. 1119) alienated one church to enrich his relations, and concluded many other bargains of doubtful morality, one against the voice of the whole community. His successor Geoffrey (d. 1146), though an admirable abbot, enriched a brother-in-law and a friend from abbey lands, and made other doubtful bargains without the monks' consent. The next, Ralph (d. 1151), stripped the shrine of its wonderful gold-work, which he caused to be melted down, to buy an estate: later, it is true, he gave this estate to the convent. Robert (d. 1166), though a first-rate business man, left the abbey in debt to the amount of more than £500, *i.e.* perhaps one-quarter or one-fifth of its yearly income. Simon (d. 1188) enriched his kindred from abbey money and left the same amount of debt, partly to Jews. Of John de Hertford (d. 1260) Matthew Paris, writing in 1255, says:

This Abbot John never squandered the goods or possessions of his Abbey for carnal friendship or through favour to his parents, kinsfolk, or neighbours—a praise which can be truly given to few or none of his predecessors. So at least say I, Matthew Paris, writing in the 20th year of his abbacy; as to the future, I do not presume to prophesy.

In fact, the absence of nepotism in great churchmen, from the pope downwards, is often treated by chroniclers as an exceptional virtue. It is difficult to exaggerate the laxity of medieval practice, and even of theory, in financial matters; and monastic society was no exception. Abbot William of St Albans (d. 1214) had given 140 marks of abbey money for the knighting of his cousin. Accused of this before the papal legate by certain "too indiscreet" monks, he defended himself by pleading that he had since given more to the convent kitchen out of his own (abbatial) income. The legate set this plea aside as wholly superfluous, since the abbot needed no such justification. "My Lord Abbot", said he, "thou hadst full right to spend of the substance of thy Church in relief of the poverty of any needy man ready to perish, and especially of thine own kinsman; and this (I boldly assert) is an almsgiving which cannot be blamed."

The succeeding financial history of St Albans may be gleaned from *The Victoria County History of Hertfordshire*, IV, 383 ff.

¹ *Vitae Abbatum*, under the different reigns here mentioned.

Under Roger de Morton (1263-90) the abbot's two chaplains "took advantage of the trust reposed in them to seal charters and contract loans without the convent's knowledge, and finally absconded with ornaments and treasure". Moreover, in his last illness he granted corrodies to his kinsfolk. "Yet the convent might consider itself on the whole fortunate in Roger, for he was a man of good life, religious and literary, and left the house scarcely 100 marks in debt." Of John de Berkhamstead (1290-1301) we read: "his shortcomings appear to have been the result of financial straits." John de Maryns (1302-9), hampered by payments to pope and king, was so much in debt by 1305 that the king put the abbey for a year under the custody of William de Bohun. He left the house £2000 in debt. Hugh de Eversden (1309-27) left debts of £333 and a large burden of pensions and corrodies; yet "altogether, from extraordinary sources, he had raised over £18,000 during his abbacy". Some of this was due to misfortune, but much to reckless waste: "when all is said, the abbot's actual needs and difficulties only make his profusion more inexcusable." Richard de Wallingford (1327-36), son of a blacksmith, "from the first, struck the note of retrenchment", and forwent the usual magnificent installation-feast. Five of his obedientiaries refused to pay their share of the tax laid on all the clergy: Richard fought them doggedly, and broke them by excommunication and threat of flogging. He did much to restore the finances, and would have done more but for long and painful illness. Michael de Mentmore (1336-49) was again a good administrator. Thomas de la Mare (1349-96), another excellent abbot, was disheartened after a few years of rule and would have resigned but for the Black Prince's dissuasion. John de la Moote (1396-1401) was an able financier but developed a mania for building. "In the construction of a princely residence for himself at Tyttenhanger, a scheme of doubtful value to the abbey, he passed all bounds in extravagance and forgetfulness of duty." At his death he left "many debts, and stores and furniture much reduced". William Heyworth (1401-20) absented himself for two years to keep down expenses. John Wheathampstead was a man of great ability. Before resigning (1440) he had improved the abbey finances by nearly £10,000. John Stoke (1440-51) lived sparingly, and asserted on his death-bed that he

had saved £666, of which his official-general, William Wallingford, and his senior chaplain, Thomas Wallingford, brothers, had charge. John Wheathampstead was re-elected abbot (1452-65); but the two brothers disbursed only £166: the granaries were empty and the debts amounted to £400. There was a great scandal, but William Wallingford was allowed to retain his post, though the abbot had accused him of peculation to the amount of £1000. "The story can hardly be dismissed as entirely fiction."¹ Wheathampstead's second reign was as prosperous as could be expected after the second battle of St Albans, when the wild Northerners sacked the town and emptied the abbey granaries and cellars. William Albone (1465-76), though he gave £400 to the church and acquired property for the abbey worth £66 a year, left £1830 of debt. William Wallingford (1476-92) was now elected on the strength of his reputation as a financier; that his past should have been condoned will surprise no student who has followed similar stories in other monasteries.² "He inaugurated his abbacy with much splendour, giving two great banquets, one at Tyttenhanger and the other at St Albans, which he entered accompanied by a train of 440 servants and tenants." After fourteen years of his reign, Cardinal Morton sent him that terrible monition which no quibbles can altogether explain away.³ In that, he was accused of dilapidation to the value of more than £5333. The account of his benefactions in the obit book must be discounted by this, and by what seem its obvious exaggerations. At least, however, he appears to have left the abbey out of debt. Thomas Ramryge (1492-1521) was in debt in 1511, and left the monastery indebted at his death, but the amount is uncertain. Thomas Wolsey (1521-30) involved the abbey in £2666 of debt; in 1529 he illegally alienated £133 a year to Anne Boleyn's brother, and attempted to get a pension for himself. Robert Catton (1531-38) saw the finances grow worse and worse; but for this he was not mainly responsible;

¹ As Cardinal Gasquet did in his *Abbot Wallingford*. In my review of the book on its first appearance, I pointed out how this apology rested on the grossest liberties taken with the text of Cardinal Morton's *Monitio*.

² For instance, Wallingford himself and Boston and Dixwell on the same page of *V.C.H.* (p. 406).

³ See the thorough and impartial discussion in *V.C.H.* pp. 407-8. In my next volume I shall expose, as I did in my review without reply, the actual liberties which Cardinal Gasquet took with the text of Morton's monition.

Thomas Cromwell and other unscrupulous outsiders were already preying upon the abbey, after the example set by Wolsey. He was deposed mainly on grounds of "dilapidation and negligent administration", in favour of his personal enemy Richard Stevenage (1538-39), under whom, within a few weeks, "the weight of debt was becoming unbearable". The abbot and his monks surrendered next year, under what pressure everybody knows. The income of the abbey was reckoned for taxation purposes at £2102 clear; a rough list of its jewels, gold, and silver plate is given in *V.C.H.* (p. 414).

The story of those two abbeys shows plainly how much the finances of the monastery depended upon the abbot for the time being: or, in an English cathedral monastery, upon the prior, who had practically the power of an abbot. They show also—and in this they are typical—how false is the exaggerated stress which has often been laid upon the Black Death. From the moment when our records begin to abound, we get frequent complaints from the monks of abbatial waste and tyranny, and corroborative evidence from cold official documents. When all allowance has been made for the natural predominance of darker shades in these documents, where much that was good might pass unrecorded, it still seems impossible to believe either that monastic business management was far above the level of outsiders in that rough society, or that, by going backwards in history, we can arrive at anything approaching a Golden Age. The bitter cry of the subject monk under a despotic spendthrift comes in its most heartrending form from the chronicler of Farfa, perhaps the greatest of all European abbeys except Cluny in its day. In the election of 1090, many scruples were expressed as to the choice of Beraldus, but almost all on material grounds; there is little hint of spiritual considerations in the forefront. When elected, he justified the worst apprehensions of those who had hesitated to vote for him. In his nine years of reign he wasted the conventual goods and neglected his monks, one of whom

saw one night a fearful vision, to wit, how this abbot devoured tender and innocent child, roasted brown [*coctum assatumque*]. When he had cut up and almost finished devouring these roasted limbs certain of the bystanders fled away in amazement at such a sight and, returning after a while, to see what should be the end of the

cruelty, they found him now eating greedily of the child's brain on a sop of bread.

The story was told in Chapter, without any name; and the abbot remarked: "Be ye sure that the man of whom this vision was seen is a man marked for death". That prophetic word was fulfilled; one day the abbot had eaten heartily; he fell into a fit: the Holy Communion was administered, but came out of his mouth again; God's judgement was manifest.¹

Abbot Bower of Inchcolm, in his continuation of Fordun's *Chronicle*, tells a story almost equally significant, of the abbot whose waste and luxury, abetted by his cellarer, brought Holme Cultram to ruin. He was led in the spirit to one hall filled with obedientiaries, unrecognizable in their drawn cowls, all silent and all damned; thence into a great vault where abbots like himself were fed with the sulphurous fat that dripped from innumerable flitches of hell-bacon; yet his heart was too hard for repentance, and in madness he forestalled the sentence of damnation.² At St-George of Ossiach in Austria, according to the local tradition, one abbot had so deliberately wasted the goods and destroyed the discipline, "granting to each monk a procuress", that the scandalized neighbourhood believed him to have been a devil who had borrowed the real abbot's body during his absence at the Roman court.³

¹ *M.G.H. Scriptt.* xi, 562-4.

² Fordun, ii, 12; see Appendix.

³ H. Pez, *Scriptt. Rer. Aust.* (1743), ii, 643. See Appendix.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CAUSES OF DEBT

WE may now proceed to analyse the main items of wasteful expenditure which caused this frequent financial embarrassment.

The heaviest single item, by far, was that of building; and here, of course, we shall avoid taxing them of vain expense. Even those who sympathize least with the dogmatic and liturgical impulses which prompted this enormous outlay will be grateful to them for the artistic work which they encouraged, and will regret the barbarous haste with which much was destroyed at the Dissolution which might have been systematically used—as a little of it was sporadically—for schools, colleges, and hospitals. If I do not refer to this again, the reader will none the less bear it constantly in mind when I pass on to less justifiable expenditure. At the same time, we must remember that the cost of these greatest buildings seldom or never fell entirely upon the monks' regular revenues. Sometimes they made personal sacrifices in this field, as in the oft-quoted case of St Albans where the community gave up wine for fifteen years for the building of a new refectory and dormitory;¹ or again at Norwich where the monks gave up some of their extra pittances for the chapter-house and, possibly, for the cloister.² But, far more frequently, the extra resources needed for new buildings came from papal indulgences or from other appeals to the charity of outsiders. Sometimes, indeed, they were almost altogether paid for from outside, as when Edward I built the whole of Val Royal abbey,³ or when the offerings at Edward II's tomb met the cost of the choir at Gloucester. The choir and transept of Westminster abbey, for which Henry III paid, cost about £50,000 in coin of the time; but that, of course, was exceptional.

We must remember also that the medieval builder, whether patron or artist, was generally pitiless for his predecessor.

¹ *Gesta Abbatum*, I, 220. [1200 A.D.]

² Saunders, p. 133.

³ At a total cost of £32,000: see *Ars Quat. Coron.* XLIV, 5.

'work', and that much of our finest work thus disappeared long before the Reformation.¹ For instance, the St Albans chronicler notes that Abbot Michael [1340] destroyed a beautiful hall built by his predecessor at Tyttenhanger, "to the no small damage of his successors, and notable harm to the abbey. For this is the character of nearly all successive prelates, that they make little of their predecessors' energies, and either destroy the buildings magnificently erected by them, or desert them by going to dwell at other places which catch their fancy more".²

In a great monastery, tradition consecrated great waste on the very threshold of the new ruler's reign. Side by side with the power which he often had of taxing his tenants for his "joyous entrance", he might spend on his installation-banquet as much as the combined yearly incomes of a dozen country squires.³ When John de Berkhamstead was elected at St Albans (1290), the chronicler tells us: "No small multitude flocked together to the splendid feast which our prior held to celebrate his incoming." He himself, finding his house miserably impoverished, was altogether unable to "pay to the merchants, at the appointed date, this aforesaid loan of 1300 marks [contracted by his predecessor]; wherefore he paid heavy interest beyond the capital".⁴ Again, we have seen Wallingford's two great feasts, at a time when the utmost economy was called for. What could be done at more favourable times by another great abbey may be read in Thorne's chronicle of St Augustine's at Canterbury.⁵ The chronicler has not told us (what we learn from another source) that Abbot Thomas Fyndone (1283) "made a great [installation] feast, at which were present all the prelates and sixty-six knights, besides a great number of other persons of note; the whole

¹ I have brought this out in *Art and the Reformation*, ch. xxii.

² *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. II, 371; cf. III, 418.

³ *E.H.R.* Oct. 1934, pp. 631 ff. The income-tax returns for 1436 show that greater knights had an average income of £208; lesser knights, of £60; esquires, of £24. Making all allowance for differences of date and for the almost certainty that these incomes were underestimated by the taxers, we may still see that it would have been easy to choose, in 1309, twelve Kentish or Middlesex squires whose combined incomes could not have defrayed the £287 spent on Abbot Bourne's feast.

⁴ *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. II, 19.

⁵ Twysden, *Scriptores Decem*, pp. 2010 ff. This very valuable chronicle is now accessible in an English translation by A. H. Davis.

company amounting to 4500 men", and that he began a new kitchen which cost £414. 10s.¹ This mighty spender was succeeded in 1309 by Ralph de Bourne, whose guests were 50 per cent. more numerous than Fyndone's. Concerning this banquet Thorne writes:

And, since modern times [*i.e.* A.D. 1397] are as nothing in comparison with times past for abundance of goods and for affluence of earthly possessions, therefore I have thought it expedient to record the provision that was made for this abbot's installation; not that we should follow and attempt to vie with him, but rather that we should marvel at him. These, then, were his expenses: Of wheat, 53 quarters, price £19; of malt, 58 quarters, price £17. 10s.; of wine, 11 tuns, price £24; of oats for the guests, as well within, as without the Gates of the City, 20 quarters, price £4; for spice, £28; for 300 lb. of wax, price £8; of almonds, 500 lbs., price £3. 18s.; of ox carcasses 30, price £27; of hogs 100, price £16; of sheep 200, price £30; of geese 1000, price £16; of capons and hens 500, price £6. 5s.; of pullets 463, price £3. 14s.; of pigs 200, price £5; of swans 34, price £7; of rabbits 600, price £15; of shields of brawn 17, price £3. 5s.; of partridges, mallards, bitterns and larks, £18; of earthen pots 1000, price 15s.; of salt, 9 quarters, price 10s.; of cups 1400; and dishes and platters 3300; of stoups and [bowls], £8. 4s.; of fish, cheese, milk onions, price £2. 10s.; of eggs 9600, price £4. 10s.; in saffron and pepper, £1. 14s.; in coals, and casks and setting up furnaces, £2. 8s.; in 300 ells of canvas, £4; in making up tables, trestles and dressers, £1. 14s.; also given to the cooks and their boys, £6; and minstrels, £3. 10s.; the sum-total is £287. 5s., with the allowance of presents. And, at the first sitting down, there were, in different places, 6000 folk and more, great men and others, corresponding to three thousand dishes.²

That is, the guests ate in messes of two, as we see frequently figured in manuscripts of the time. The *menu*, therefore, was as follows: For each person $1\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. of bread + $\frac{1}{20}$ of an ox + $\frac{1}{60}$ of a hog + $\frac{1}{30}$ of a sheep + $\frac{1}{6}$ of a goose + $1\frac{1}{2}$ egg + $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of almonds + slice of cheese. In addition, each person might have chosen one of the following dishes: $\frac{1}{4}$ capon, $\frac{1}{2}$ pullet, $\frac{1}{8}$ sucking pig or $\frac{1}{4}$ rabbit. For drink, $5\frac{1}{2}$ pints of sound ale per person, and possibly as much as $3\frac{1}{2}$ pints of wine: that depends upon the size of the cask. We may safely say, however, at least one pint. Finally, brawn and swan enough to satisfy the high table a

¹ Dugdale-Caley, I, 122.

² Thorne, *Chronica*, col. 2010, reading *stopis* for *scopis*.

least. The cost was nearly 1s. per head, even including service, crockery, candles, etc.; this would equal three days' pay for a skilled mason. No doubt most of the guests carried home what they could not eat; this was commonly done at that time. Thorne is doubtless justified in vaunting this as almost unprecedented in its magnificence; but it cannot have been entirely so; for Pecham, who, as archbishop, was also titular abbot of the cathedral monastery, estimated the expenses of his enthronization in 1279 at considerably more than 2000 marks. In my next volume I shall have occasion to show the frequency of feasts on a smaller scale in almost every house which could afford them.

Bishop Orford of Ely, in his injunctions to the convent (1307), warned the prior:

Let him abstain from immoderate feasts; and, when he must hold such, let him hold them moderately, in so far as the revenues suffice, lest one brief hour consume the livelihood of a long time, whereby the convent will be reduced to leanness; but let him keep the goods of the house and spend them discreetly to the honour of God and the profit of his monastery and the whole convent, for the sustentation whereof they were given in past time.¹

This was so even in the Mendicant Orders. In 1394, when the Dominicans held a general chapter at Canterbury, the abbot and prior of St Augustine's gave them a feast which cost £10.² And the Dominican Bromyard, Chaucer's contemporary, complains of this as a signal cause of temporal and spiritual decay in his Order.

By reason of the contributions for those who ride on horseback to the Chapter General and Provincial, the exactions and taxes are so heavy, and the convents are so burdened; and by reason of feasts for inceptors books are pawned or sold, because the communities can neither keep their buildings nor their roofs in repair nor well maintain the wonted number of inmates; whence there impends ruin to the buildings and pawning or sale for the books, or depletion of the libraries, and slender fare, and setting the buildings to pawn. We may see this by experience in the Two Sicilies, where the brethren are wont to ride, wherein, within a short while, the inmates have become very few, as may be seen at Brindisi and other parts of

¹ *Register*, MS. f. 59.

² Thorne, *Chronica*, col. 2197.

Apulia, where the buildings are falling and the number of inmates so decreases that, as I learned from the prior of Brindisi (and his words were confirmed by my eyes and ears), he had now only five brethren in his convent, whereas there were wont to be forty; for the land is full of horses.... It is certain that both communities and subjects are impoverished by the exactions of their rulers and superiors, explicit or implicit, which cause this poverty. Thus, the more they are impoverished and the less they can give, the more is exacted from them; for, in these modern times, wherein the charity of many groweth cold, and benefactors decrease and die and fail, greater ostentation has begun, and more abundantly superfluous expenses in horses and inceptions and contributions.... It must needs be conceded that, if such exaltation be continued, ruin will follow; since reason, which cannot easily be evaded, drives us to that admission. For, when those two premisses are granted, that friends and charity and alms are decreasing and that expenses increase (which cannot be met without the help of friends), it is hard to see how such expenditure can long continue except by selling our books and chalices and other precious things, and by subtraction from food and drink and clothing and the money which should be spent on the upkeep of our buildings. But those premisses are true; for we learn both by daily experience and on Christ's authority that charity groweth cold, whence cometh the diminution of friends to the Religious and of alms.... A man might compose more dolorous lamentations on the ruin and spiritual confusion of some Religious than Jeremiah did upon the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews. Yet alas! not all men bewail this plague, but only such as have seen or heard of the Religion of former days.¹

In this last sentence, Bromyard is perhaps consciously harking back to his great predecessor in the Order, Cardinal Hugh of St-Cher, who, in his great Bible commentary, had emphatically expounded Lamentations i, 1 in this same sense. *How doth the city sit solitary* (writes Jeremiah) *that was full of people! How is the mistress of the Gentiles become a widow, the princes of the provinces made solitary!* "Full it was" (comments Hugh) "in the past. For, where a hundred monks were aforetime, there are in these days scarce a score." Monasticism, indeed, was once literally the mistress of the gentiles: now it is puffed up with pride and corrupted by papal exemptions which remove it from the healthy authority of the bishops. Again, "having gone forth from her first liberty (to wit, from poverty) she hath come into servitude

¹ *Sum. Praedic.* P. iv, § 26.

to the gentiles, and into the affliction of vices, when she began to multiply her temporal goods".¹

It will be noted that both the cardinal's Bible Commentary and his brother's Encyclopaedia for Preachers draw the same moral, that great possessions involve close connexion with worldly people and worldly affairs, and the unavoidable consequence that they are vulnerable to worldly weapons. The historian of Orval notes that each of the two great efforts to reform this Cistercian monastery followed upon a period of great wealth, "and that they aimed at removing the dangers which ordinarily accompany that dazzling guest".² We have seen how, on the Continent, whole monasteries became appropriated to nobles; and, even in England, the descendants of the founder, or some local noble without any such claim, would sometimes demand very burdensome rights of hospitality for himself and retinue, or a corrody for one of his protégés. Here is a corrody-case from the Rolls of Parliament in 1302 (I, 156 b):

Plea to our lord the King from Gilbert del Bed, who hath been his groom for twenty years and more, both beyond the sea in time of war and on this side the sea in garrisons for ten years; and then he was taken on our lord the King's last sojourn in Scotland, and so sore wounded by the Scots that he can never henceforth help himself; wherefore he prayeth that it may please him to grant his letters to some house of Religion, that he be no charge on the King for his livelihood, even as the King vouches after his grace to others who have so long served him.

Answer. Let him name some place of Religion not already burdened by the King; and the King shall write for him, etc.

Afterwards the said Gilbert came and named two places; to wit, Bardney or Leicester.³

There is no doubt that monasteries often lost considerably by different forms of extortion: possibly, on an average, even 10 per cent. of their income. Two instances from Dugdale, one on the better side and one on the worse, will illustrate this (v, 12 and 437).

William de Warenne, the founder of Lewes, gave the house

¹ *Opera*, iv, 284. For full text see Appendix.

² *Cart. Orval*, p. ix.

³ Cf. *ibid.* 56 b; 58 a, b; 60 a. For further instances see *Corrodies at Worcester in the Fourteenth Century* (Worcs. Hist. Soc. 1917).

a particularly carefully drawn and generous charter. He wrote:

And if we lodge there more than twice in the year, then whatsoever we expend there of the house's goods, either ourselves or any of our men who come thither throughout the whole year, beyond those two [statutory] lodging-times, the monks shall make their reckoning, and we will pay it from our own goods at the end of the year, on peril of our souls. Thus I do, and thus will I do, and thus I will that my heirs shall do, lest by this cause they turn what is my and their free gift into servitude and rapine, even as they wish to be saved at the Day of Judgement.

The other instance is from Pipewell abbey (founded 1143). The chronicler writes how a good knight, William of Cotesbrok, gave considerable lands and

always stood as a wall in defence of his monks in their anguish and oppressions, in so far as he could. His successor was Robert Boutevileyn, who in many ways troubled and vexed the monks of Pipewell. For example, this Robert, led by a mad counsel of Achitophel, claimed in hereditary right, as he said, the lodging of one horse in the abbot's stable as often and for as long as he would. *Item*, he demanded yearly a winter robe, of the suit of the abbot's cloak. *Item*, he demanded four blood-lettings yearly within the abbey.¹ *Item*, he demanded that his hunting-dogs should lodge in the abbey at the monks' expense and at his own will. *Item*, he imposed upon the monks that they had never had any charter of foundation for the abbey, but only a certain indenture which was once shown at a love-day at Langport in the presence of wholesome counsel on either side. In short, this Robert one day sent a horse to lodge at Pipewell. His groom brought it to the abbot's stable; and there, without consulting the abbot, he bound his horse to the rack by its halter. At last this came to the ears of the abbot, who in all haste consulted the lawyers as to his action in such a case. They advised that, when the groom took the horse to water, then the abbot's grooms should shut the gate upon him and his horse; and thus they did. So he left the said horse at the gate of the abbot's stable, and took his horn and went twice or thrice round the abbey walls, raising the hue and cry upon the abbot and convent. Then by sane and wholesome counsel on the part of the abbot and convent two monks, to wit Peter of Thirnebi and Robert of Dunchirch and

¹ The blood-letting was always followed by a term of rest and better food in the infirmary, called *recreatio*. I deal with this in my next volume.

a certain layman named Henry of Spalding and other layfolk took the said horse to Cotesbrok at harvest-time; and, finding no man in the courtyard, they bound it fast there by the halter to its master's manger. What next? Scarce had the monks left the courtyard when Robert's men came back from the fields and detained Henry of Spalding with the horse for two or three days: to wit, until the said Robert's return. Then Robert, beside himself with fury, threatened our abbot and all the monks that, if ever he caught any of them on horseback, he would forthwith cut off the beasts' tails; or, if on foot, he would maltreat their persons. They, each and all, feared the man as a second Herod.

It ended in another love-day, with nine knights and other men learned in the law; the abbot bought off Robert's claim with £40 in ready money: the sinner went off straight to the Scottish wars and "paid the debt of death" at Bannockburn.

Large monasteries often got letters of protection from pope or king against forced hospitality or the exactions of lay lords; and in England, at any rate, these were generally respected in the main.¹ But the records of the visitors, and of the monks themselves, allude frequently to the difficulty of avoiding minor encroachments from powerful folk.

In Scotland, this was one of the ways in which the feudal lords, long before the Reformation, had set themselves to prey upon Church revenues. Under the year 1350, we find a document of great significance in the *Calendar of Papal Letters* (II, 200):

Signification that in Scotland there is a most evil custom, or rather tyranny or corruption, by which the nobles and powerful men of those parts in their journeys occupy the canons' houses, and driving out their households therein eat and sleep, to the injury of the canons and danger of burning the cathedral; the bishop therefore prays the pope to grant letters authorising sentence of excommunication against such occupiers and disturbers.

On the Continent, things were often far worse; for the Truce of God, even at its best, had seldom or never a decisive voice in the prevention of war; while, for centuries long, the bloodiest wars of Europe were between Papacy and Empire. We have seen how St-Trond suffered; and scores of examples might be quoted,

¹ Cf. Wood-Legh, pp. 2, 3, 7.

some equally lamentable.¹ The Benedictine historian of Tournus, recounting the "great violences and extraordinary acts of brigandage" which his abbey had suffered, fills a quarto page with similar instances (p. 130). So also does the historian of St Gallen.²

In Germany, where feudalism remained to the end of the Middle Ages a political as well as a social force, the great lords were even more burdensome to the monasteries than elsewhere. Among other rights, they often claimed that of quartering their hunting folk and hounds upon the monks. About 1450, the pious Count Ulrich of Württemberg, as *advocatus* of the convent of Baknang, granted it a charter expressly renouncing this claim, "seeing that, in this convent of Baknang . . . very ill-conditioned persons are oftentimes found among the guests, and specially among those who give themselves to hunting, persons who disturb the fast and who are ill fitted for exercises of devotion". Cless, who quotes this from the charter itself, adds the following illustrative instances.³

It was politic in this respect when Herbold the waggish Abbot of Murrhard (nicknamed Botz Gutigott), at the time when the huntsmen and hounds came to his abbey, left his flock and came to Stuttgart, where he joined in the court festivities. When men wondered at this, and asked him whether he had any complaint to make, promising him redress, he made answer, "Good God! [*Gutigott*] I thought Murrhard was an abbey of King Louis's foundation; but now I see that it is a dog-kennel, for my lord's huntsmen and their hounds are quartered there; and, as my monks' psalmody is superfluous amid all this barking and baying, I intend to stay at court so long as these stay in my cloister" . . . The feeding and housing of these hunters and hounds was always the first and foremost of monastic complaints against the oppression of their *advocati* and lords; and the monks, unable to get rid of them altogether, preferred to buy themselves off with loans, at least for a few years. Thus, in 1464, the abbey of Bebenhausen lent Count Eberhard 5000 gulden, Blaubeuren and Hirschau 1500 each, and Herrenalb 1000, for this purpose. The convents in the Brenz valley had an ancient covenant, as old as the Helfenstein dynasty, that the huntsmen might house in the convents for six weeks of the year, with their servants and hounds.

¹ *E.g.* the case of St Prospero at Reggio, as told by Salimbene and by Affarosi.

² *Arx*, I, 466 ff.

³ *Landes- und Culturgesch. v. Württemberg*, Th. II, Abth. i, p. 346.

Here, again, is a complaint from a Rhineland house not long before the Reformation.

The neighbouring counts and knights collect at the abbey with numerous retainers and horses [*cum equitatu et multitudine familiae*]; they sit drinking at the abbot's table, and his revenues are so diminished that he is minded to quit and begone; the neighbourhood is infested by evil folk who make a trade of arson, robbery and devastation of crops; the great nobles compel the abbot to accept from his tributary peasants who live on their lands, instead of full-weight moneys, an evil and worthless coin current in those parts.¹

Moreover, the constant civil wars played here a disastrous part. The chronicler of Camp, under the year 1298, tells how his abbey suffered from the seven years' war between the Archbishop of Cologne on one side and, on the other, the city of Cologne and the Duke of Jülich. Through these, as he calculates, the monks lost 40,000 florins (or £5000 sterling of that time), and they could only rebuild their burnt buildings by borrowing 4000 florins from the Jews. Again, under 1341, he complains that the lord of Ryperscheit refused the offer of 300 florins a year in exchange for the rights he claimed of "exactions and undue hospitalities". He had the legal excuse that his ancestors had founded the house; he, therefore, was its patron, and these exactions were in natural conformity with the fact "that he had formerly defended their lands in war and was willing in future to defend them from invasion or spoliation from others. Yet his [and the duke's] heirs or posterity kept that defence but ill".² So, again, the Abbot of St-Germain-d'Auxerre was glad to pay yearly rent to a neighbouring noble for a certain wood, on condition that he would save it from invasion by any other man.³ Every English abbey of importance had one or more protectors, under different names, who drew a salary and were supposed to stand by the monks in their difficulties, though we find complaints of their inaction. This (to which I shall have to return in my last volume) takes much of the force from the favourable reports of the abbeyes often given by neighbouring gentry at the time of the Dissolution. In 1478, for instance, Lord Stanley was

¹ G. Eckertz, *M. Gladbach*, p. 161.

² Eckertz, II, 367, 377.

³ Fleury, p. 216.

drawing from Whalley abbey a fee of £6. 13s. 4d.; a yearly stipend greater than that of many parochial vicars; and three other knights received nearly £5 between them.¹

In earlier days there had usually been real protection, and a very handsome *quid pro quo* when a rich man put his son or daughter into a convent. Here is a characteristic case from the Autun chartulary (p. 157, A.D. 1239). Gautier, lord of Sully, made a will very generous to the clergy, but also minute in its care for his family. He left to his eldest son William the castle and estate of Sully, but William and his mother are to dower the eldest daughter handsomely. To the next son, Guy, two estates are left; and he, with William, is bound to "give competent help" to the third son, Hugh. The second daughter, Huguette, is already a nun; to her Gautier leaves a life-pension: this was contrary to her profession, but it was frequent enough in rich families. The two youngest children are briefly dealt with: "I will that my little son shall be a monk and my little daughter a nun." The descendants of such men, naturally enough, expected a *quid pro quo* from the abbey; and, if they happened to be tyrannous and greedy, they had a terrible lever at their disposal, as Hugh of St-Cher points out.

But as early as the twelfth century we find complaints that this privilege is sadly abused, especially in favour of noble bastards. The chronicler of St-Trond writes:

In the days of this Abbot William [about 1270] there were many [*plures*] monks of this house who were illegitimate sons of nobles... one was son of Henry, Bishop of Liège. The monks, vexed at the reception or intrusion of such as these, resolved unanimously, with the consent of William or his successor, that none thenceforward should be received unless he himself, and both his parents, and the parents of both parents, were of legitimate birth.²

And similar evidence may be found in every age down to the Reformation and beyond, though less frequently in England than elsewhere. The Franciscan Pépin [1530] says:

Many nobles, finding themselves burdened with a multitude of offspring, and unable to make worldly provision for all, settle some

¹ Whitaker, *Whalley*, I, 121. For the protector of the cathedral priory at Canterbury and his fees see *Lit. Cant.* R.S. II, 82, 110.

² *Gest. Trudon*, M.G.H. *Scriptt.* x, 402.

while yet in their childhood, in monasteries. When these come to the age at which they must make their profession, they are perhaps ashamed to return to the world, and certainly they are bent by fear for their parents, who tell them that they will never give them any help if they so return, so that they take the religious vows with their lips, though not willingly and with full heart. Whence it cometh that such folk rarely profit in Religion; but either they apostatize or they lead unchaste and irreligious lives afterwards, or else they urge upon the Court of Rome (especially if they be men) that they may assume the state of secular priests and live after a secular fashion, alleging in excuse for their sins that, when they took the vows, they scarce knew what they did; or again (as aforesaid) that they feared their parents.... Therefore the pope is wont to add to the dispensation he granteth them: "Laying upon your conscience the burden [of the truth of your allegations of fact]".¹

And again, in another volume of his sermons: "oftentimes do those who are poor in this world take holy orders, or seek entrance into some monastic Order, that they may defend themselves thenceforward from poor living".² Other selfish postulants (he says) are the sons of nobles, either because they are younger and therefore ill provided from the paternal property, or because they are sickly or deformed. The papal registers, when we read between the lines, give ample evidence here. Opening any volume of the Calendars at random, and looking through a few pages, we are almost sure to find some English, Welsh, Scotch or Irish cleric pleading his noble race as additional reason beyond the usual fee for a papal indult, and at the same time receiving apostolic dispensation from the disabilities attaching to his illegitimate birth.

Here and there we find prelates, or even monks, who kicked against "conversions" of this type.

¹ Pépin, *Ninive*, Serm. XL, ff. 340-2.

² *Sermones*, f. 78 d.

CHAPTER XXIX

PAYMENTS TO ROME

WHEN the abbot of one of the great houses died, the king took his estates in hand during the vacancy, as in the case of any other baron. If this had always been honestly done, the loss would not have been all that it seems; since, though the money would cease coming in, it would also cease going out at the full normal rate of baronial expenditure in the household. But the royal officers were often grasping and wasteful, and the historian of the St Albans abbots is only too well justified in many of his complaints.¹

Still more serious, and more bitterly resented even by the most orthodox, were the exactions of the papal court: for here a lump sum had to be paid, whether the vacancy were long or short, for apostolic confirmation of the new abbot. Those sums would sometimes be almost incredible if the witness of the chroniclers were not borne out by official documents.

The system, like most others of its kind, had grown up by gradual encroachments of the central authority. From at least the eighth century onwards, it had become customary to insist that bishops should "visit the tombs of the Apostles" at Rome every year, unless they were too distant. When the popes granted "exemption" to any abbey, this duty was laid upon the abbot of the house which received so valuable a privilege. Then gradually, by a natural process, he was allowed to compound for the actual visit by sending to Rome such offerings as he might be expected to have made at the tombs of Peter and Paul. Equally naturally, this was gradually transformed into a heavy tax, paid by these abbeys to secure the great advantages of exemption from episcopal visitation. But, as usual, the husk of the custom was preserved in official formulae when the kernel had disappeared; *e.g.* in 1295-8 an account-book of the Roman court records the names of bishops and abbots who "visited the college of cardinals in five marks of gold"; or "in 300 livres

¹ *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. *passim*.

tournois", or "in 150 marks of silver", etc., etc.¹ The chronicler Oxenedes names 1257 as the year in which this became, by formal papal decree, a settled principle of Church law.² In other ways also the popes gained enormously by treating abbots as equal to bishops. The Dominican bishop Thomas of Cantimpré [1260] complains of the abuse by which abbots, whose personal worth or culture was far from conspicuous, were glad to buy the privilege of using episcopal insignia and pomp at the price of huge sums paid to the Roman court. He adds:

I am ashamed to record what I have seen. Anchin is a very great and wealthy abbey in the diocese of Arras [and therefore in my own neighbourhood]. The abbot of this house, who scarce knew the first elements of spiritual rule, attained to the elevation of these two horns *i.e.* the mitre] at so great an expense of money that he left his abbey in debt to the extent of more than 10,000 *livres*. There we have a most foul bargain and a plain laughing-stock.³

This was only part of a movement by which the papacy claimed unfettered disposition of all Church revenues; a tendency strongly reinforced by the removal to Avignon and still more by the Great Schism.

Let me give instances here, chronologically, of the extent to which these revenues, founded originally for the poor and for Masses and prayers, were diverted to the uses of the Roman court. In the nature of the case they are extreme instances, since the smaller houses often slipped through the meshes of the net. In all these cases, I am reducing the foreign coinage to terms of sterling at that time.

At St-Martial-de-Limoges, in 1214, the abbot-elect was too ill for the journey to Rome. He sent proctors who spent £75 in vain, for the pope quashed the election.⁴ When Bury St Edmunds fell vacant in 1248, the king seized the opportunity to extort £800 during the vacancy: and the pope, rejecting the new abbot-elect after examination as insufficient, recalled him presently and offered, "of his pure mercy", to confirm the election on payment of £533. 6s. 8d., payable to his own bankers.⁵

¹ Lunt, *Papal Revenues*, II, 305.

² *Chronica*, R.S. p. 191.

³ *De Apibus*, 20 (lib. I, c. vi, §§ 2, 3).

⁴ *St-Martial*, p. 18.

⁵ Matthew Paris, *Chron. Maj.* R.S. v, 40; cf. *Memorials of Bury*, R.S. I xxxi.

Again, in 1270, the abbot-elect of Bury spent £819 on his journey to Rome and back, including expenses at the court for his confirmation.¹ St Albans paid at least £800 for papal confirmation in 1263, and more than £1700 in 1290.²

Westminster paid £533. 6s. 8d. for the confirmation of Abbot Lewesham [1258]; he died that same year, and his successor had to borrow £666 to pay the demands of the papal court.³ In [1305], the prior of Durham had to pay for his consecration £2000 to the pope and £666 to the cardinals. In 1316, the bishop "had so heavy an imposition of money to be paid to the Roman court [for his installation], that he was scarce able to pay it in fourteen years", and the cardinals extorted much also from the monks.⁴ In 1307, Westminster was charged £1000; after ten years, the £312 still unpaid was remitted.⁵

From the new prior of Durham, in 1308, the pope took £666 for his confirmation; and, as the prior died before he had started on his return journey, custom gave the pope, under the title of *spolia*, "all his goods, horses, silver vases, books and jewels". At Rochester, in 1319, the new bishop bound himself to the papal court for £360 in consideration of his consecration. A few months' delay ran this up to £362. 10s., which he then paid. St-Ouen-de-Rouen, in 1339, paid £3842 (15,366 *livres*) for change of abbacy, at a time when a *livre* would buy a sheep and eighteen herrings. In 1362, the new abbot had to pay £375 for his confirmation; this was probably the effect of the Hundred Years' War.⁶ The pope, imposing upon St-Bavon in 1341 a nominee of his own as abbot, made the monastery pay £300 for expenses. Two years later, the abbey had to pay for his successor a sum of which £125 represented only one instalment.⁷ In 1371 St Augustine's at Canterbury was indebted to the papal court

¹ *Mem. St Edmunds*, R.S. III, 34.

² *V.C.H. Herts*, IV, 383-4.

³ Widmore, pp. 70-2.

⁴ Wharton, I, 753, 758.

⁵ Widmore, p. 84.

⁶ Lunt, *Papal Revenues*, II, 478 (from *Hist. Dunelm Scriptt. Tres*, pp. 83-). Compare the next eight pages for the enormous sums thus taken as *spolia* by the Roman court.

⁷ *Anglia Sacra*, I, 360-1. Here and later, I count florins of the Roman Camera at four to the sterling, as shown in *Gest. Abbat.* R.S. II, 56 (1302).

⁸ *Chroniques de St-Ouen*, p. 45; *Gallia Christiana*, XI (Palmé, 187) col. 150; C. Leber, *Fortune*, p. 75.

⁹ Van Lokeren, pt. I, p. 123.

to the extent of £650 for the election of the abbot.¹ St Albans, in 1381, at last bought off these charges for papal confirmation by paying a regular tribute of £13. 3s. 4d. a year, or more than half the income of an average squire.² Westminster, in 1478, was glad to compound for £12. 10s.³ Abbot Philip of St-Denis, in his chartulary of 1411, complained

of the excessive expenses which fell upon his abbey at the promotion of each new abbot. He remarks that formerly the pope and his cardinals, for the confirmation of the abbot-elect, used to be content with a feast given after their work in consistory was over, which would cost, together with other expenses, £125 at most. But Clement V first changed this feast into a present, which had [now] attained such proportions that the monastery could no longer get an abbot without spending £2500 for the bulls; and this had become an excessive burden, especially when vacancies came in rapid succession.⁴

At the end of that century the États-Généraux of Tours (no doubt with medieval exaggeration) calculated that, in that single reign, the French monasteries had paid the pope a million ducats in first-fruits alone.⁵ In 1485, Münster was charged £150 for papal confirmation of the abbot; but the revenues were then so reduced that the claim was cut down to £50.⁶ Murbach, in 1493, paid £27;⁷ and Aulne (1497) £116. 10s.⁸ Gascoigne counts it among the pestilent errors of Bishop Reginald Pecock that

he preached at London, at Paul's Cross, that when bishops pay to the pope of Rome, before he admits them to the episcopate, £3333 or more, they do not sin in this matter, nor by these payments to the pope do they give anything (as Pecock says) to the pope, but they only hand over to the pope that which is the pope's, just as any bailiff hands over to his lord [the money which he has collected for him].⁹

He points out also that these papal exactions pressed upon the faithful poor not only ultimately (as every unjust tax must do) but far more directly. Bury St Edmunds, he says, bought off these incidental payments to pope and king for a yearly tribute

¹ Thorne, *Chronica*, col. 2206.

² *V.C.H. Herts*, IV, 394.

³ Widmore, p. 117.

⁴ Félibien, p. 336; cf. p. 337, where the author enumerates other channels through which these later popes sucked from the abbey £250 a year, moderated

later to only £150.

⁵ *Recueil*, p. 86.

⁶ Calmet, *Münster*, p. 146.

⁷ Gatrio, II, 101.

⁸ *Aulne*, p. 114.

⁹ *Lib. Verit.* p. 100.

of £26, in order to pay which they added two more to their already enormous list of appropriated churches.¹

Here and there the actual details of these transactions have survived. One set is preserved in the *Gesta Abbatum S. Albani* (R.S. II, 56); I have translated it fully in my *Life in the Middle Ages* (IV, 281). The chronicler Thorne records another, equally eloquent, from St Augustine's, Canterbury (Twysden, 2151; ch. XLI, § 1).

Here are the expenses made for the vacancy of the abbey and the confirmation of the abbot-elect:

First, for the poor at the funeral, and the monk's mind-Mass, and the wax effigy of the abbot [*pro corpore ficto*] with the hearse, £6. 2s. 2d.

Item, the expenses of the brethren who went to the king for the abbot's election, £4. 3s. 4d.

Item, for the king's charter of *congé d'élire*, and the fee of the petty bag [*de petepagge*], £1. 8s. 6d.

Item, given to divers clerks and notaries for the election, £6. 13s. 4d.

Item, the expenses of the abbot elect in presenting himself to the king, £8. 10s. 4d.

Item, the expenses of the elect with the Bishop of Winchester, £9. 3s. 4d.

Item, given to the clerks, squires, and other household servants of the said bishop after the benediction, £6. 13s. 4d.

Item, to the king's chamberlain for his fee concerning the oath, £5.

Item, to the lord king for the half year [of vacancy], £400.

Item, to the lord pope and the college of cardinals for common service, 1434 florins, at 3s. per florin, £215. 2s.

Item, to the pope and cardinals, for licence to have the elect blessed in England [and thus avoid the costly journey to Rome] £183. 2s. 6d.

Item, for the exchange of all aforesaid florins, £6. 15s.

Item, the expenses of John Pecham and Hugh Halle, proctors of the abbot elect, who went to the court at Avignon, and abode there in furtherance of the business, together with divers presents given by them, £124. 3s. 2d.

¹ *Lib. Verit.* p. 6. Gascoigne puts these at sixty (probably an exaggeration though the number is not incredible), but there is no reason to doubt his main facts.

Item, given to divers messengers of the Roman court coming with letters or sending letters for his confirmation, and for other matters touching the said elect, £31. 13s. 4d.

Item, to the escheator for simple seisin at the time of the vacancy, £2. 3s. 4d.

Total of expenses £1008. 13s. 8d.

Sometimes, again, it is the papal or chapter archives which give us the exact sums.¹ For instance, the bulls for confirmation of abbots of the Premonstratensian Order were charged according to a definite papal tariff. Prémontré itself paid 2250 florins *de camera* at every vacancy; the seven greatest houses paid altogether 5980 florins, and the rest in proportion to their revenues.²

In addition to these great contributions, innumerable smaller papal claims came sometimes either directly from the Curia or indirectly. Here is a post-Reformation example. At the Cistercian nunnery of Burtscheid, by an abusive construction of the pope's rights as Universal Disposer,

This, like other monasteries, suffered damage from the so-called *Panisbriefe* [Bread-letters]. These could be bought at a certain price from the Roman court, and gave their possessors the right to a pension from the monasteries of some Order, or from some particular monastery. It may be imagined how the monasteries were overrun with such folk who had procured pensions.³

Diocesan bishops, again, very frequently abused their rights of "procuracion" when they came to visit a house. Apart from the actual blackmail which (as we are frequently assured) the worst of them would take,⁴ the visitor always fed himself and a sometimes unreasonable retinue at the convent's expense. The

¹ Professor Lunt's and Dr Cameron's recent studies give many interesting details here. We have seen how frequently mendicant friars got from Rome "capacities" to hold benefices, in contradiction both to the letter and to the spirit of their Rules. For these, as for scores of similar indults, there was a special tariff, which went far to maintain the clerical staff at the Curia. Lunt, *Papal Revenues*, II, 527, §§ 16, 18.)

² Taié, I, 167. Moreover, priories and "cells" had nearly always to pay heavy sums as "pensions" to their mother-house. All Cluniac houses in theory, and nearly all in practice, were mere "cells" to the enormous abbey of Cluny; and the English Cluniac houses, it was asserted in the parliament of 1346, paid a tribute of £2000 a year to that mother-house. (*Rot. Parl.* I, 163.)

³ Schaaake, *Burtscheid* (Aachen, 1913), p. 115.

⁴ See my vol. II, pp. 218 ff., 230-1, 267, 317, 339, 353, 475 ff.

Rochester chronicler asserts that the Archbishop of Canterbury's official visitation in 1329 cost the monastery £24, and that he came with eighty horses in his retinue.¹ This subject is exhaustively treated in the fourth chapter of Mr C. R. Cheney's *Episcopal Visitation*, and nobody who has studied it on his own account is likely to disagree with this author's summary: "At the best of times the visitand found the expenses of hospitality very burdensome, and tried by all ways to evade it; while a rapacious prelate would make as much profit as possible from his visitation circuits" (p. 111).

Moreover, these natural causes of friction, and these obvious temptations to sharp practice on both sides, were increased by the ingrained financial corruption—we must not shrink from a word which had become a commonplace among the most orthodox contemporaries of the Roman court. Professor Lunt, in his recent detailed study, shows how, from 1316 onwards, the papacy began to take toll of the bishops' visitation fees; and gradually, it became a regular custom for Rome to allow the bishops to save considerable sums by appointing mere deputies to visit while they themselves took the full fees, on condition that they shared such gains equally with the pope. "The natural consequence was that visitations ceased" in a large number of cases; for the system put a premium on grabbing procuration fees, while it did nothing to ensure that those fees should be earned by actual visitation-work. The Council of Constance forbade the abuse, but the papacy continued to take toll of procurations under cover of crooked evasions, and in many cases "the collectors made no visitations, and thus the procurations for the time became simply a papal tax". This, on the Continent, was largely responsible for the ordinary neglect of Innocent III's decree as to regular disciplinary visitations of the monasteries.²

In 1253, according to the Benedictine chronicler Oxenede, Innocent IV ordered that the Benedictines of France should keep certain points of the Rule, apart from the Three Substantials, under pain of excommunication: "which is absurd, and

¹ Wharton, I, 369.

² Lunt, *Papal Revenues*, I, 110 ff.; II, 429 ff. In the single diocese of Metz in 1360, the monasteries had to pay more than 4350 *livres tournois* (£108 on this unjust pretext).

against all reason. But the monks of France sent their messengers to the Roman court, who gave 4000 marks of Tours, and repressed this tyrannical assault."¹ When, again, in 1256, Innocent IV wrung immense sums from the English clergy for his wars against Manfred, his legate Rustand, who collected it, "compelled the prelates of England to bear false witness, and to swear that the aforesaid money was converted to the use of their own churches."² Again, the corrupt methods of the papal tax-gatherers were notorious, from the cardinal-legate down to Chaucer's pardoner.³ The effect of these examples from Rome itself is clearly traceable in the attitude of all contributors towards papal taxation. In 1279, the pope had to answer certain questions from his collectors in England, who were finding great practical difficulties. One of the earlier papal prescriptions had run as follows: "Bishops and abbots and other honourable ecclesiastical persons, not suspected, are left to their own consciences." "This", noted the collectors, "brings the business into disorder, because, in fact, such persons commonly do not pay a twentieth, so that, inferior persons seeing this, pay what they wish, departing from the true value entirely." To which the pope would only answer: "Let it be at the discretion of the superintendents to judge who ought to be held unsuspected, and from the suspected let them exact an oath."⁴

The Dominican Bromyard is one among many witnesses who show us that all medieval churchmen who were seriously concerned for the future of religion saw these things very much as we see them. That which he writes of Roman dealings with the clergy in general may be applied to this case. The Church has two main business duties, the cure of souls and the collection of money, and she pays more attention to the latter than the former.⁵

But when they [the hierarchy] plead that want constraineth them hereunto, and that they must exact such contributions from the Church, and from consecrations at the Roman Court, and from such as visit the Court, and from bishoprics whereunto the Court maketh presentation, then God knows, and facts prove, that it is by superfluous

¹ *Chronica*, R.S. p. 178.

² Oxenedes, *Chronica*, R.S. p. 187.

³ See O. Jensen in Appendix (*E.H.R.* 1905, p. 233).

⁴ *E.H.R.* xxxii, 88; cf. Lunt, *Papal Revenues*, II, 184.

⁵ *Sum. Praedic.* H, iv, § 16.

expenses that they fall into such need. For, if we took away the burdensome multiplicity of cardinals, and their excessive multitude of horses and retainers, and their inordinate affection for their kinsfolk, and the vain pride of all their pomp, then this great need of collections would cease. For men ought to cease therefrom, lest they should scandalize the humble flock of believers in Christ, redeemed by His blood. Even if we grant this taking of a year's income from those who have been consecrated at the Papal Court, according to [present] use or abuse; granting, again, that they might, without great sin, take a tax of one tenth from the Church whensoever it pleaseth them, yet they ought to refrain from such things for the avoidance of scandal, lest the fountain of life become a fountain of poison. For if those who rule over that Most Holy See knew that not only faithless Saracens, Jews, schismatics and heretics, but even the faithful, I say not are scandalized by them, but speak evil of this pomp which they condemn as pride, deviating from the path of Christ—[if they knew] how Christian folk decry the pope for that retention by his Camera of [a commission for] consecrations or grants at the Papal Court, (saying, "It is not well that the man should have bought his bishopric at so great a price; who shall avoid our simony?"—then I reckon that, if our lords feared as they should, they would cease from such things, after the example of those men whom I have quoted in J. IX, § 13.¹

He goes on to emphasize the cruel paradox that these forced contributions have created a whole tribe of usurers attached to the papal court, since no bishop or abbot is rich enough to pay these enormous sums on the spot without borrowing. Moreover most indecent of all, the bishop in arrears is forced to obedience by excommunication, while the popes have never invented any means of preventing the usurer from exacting enormous interest through the device of a fictitious contract, the debtor signing an acknowledgement that he has received fifteen pounds while he has in fact received only ten.

For these papal usurers we have the most definite evidence. Chroniclers from Matthew Paris onwards complain; and the

¹ The examples to which he here refers us are those of three "Saracens"—*i.e.* pagan Romans—who showed incorruptible honesty in the face of offered bribes. From this he goes on to deduce: "In comparison with these Saracens how will those Christians answer to God whose right hand is so full of gift that, within a brief while after they have come to power in judiciary or other offices, they buy lands and houses from these gifts and usury, and build up much money in iniquity?"

Roman account-rolls give eloquent corroboration. As Dr Cameron writes:

The Church denounced usury, but the [papal] Camera needed money....[In the fifteenth century] the transactions between the Curia and the banking firms had been established on a business basis; and for practical purposes canonical precepts gave way to economic necessities. To whatever extent things may have been disguised to the public eye, the administrative records lay bare the fact that in practice the Apostolic Camera had fallen greatly into the hands of the bankers. These firms advanced money to meet the necessities of the Curia, largely upon the security of the revenues drawn from ecclesiastical provisions.¹

Thus, whichever way we turn, we find illustrations of the vulnerability of wealth, and of the moneys that needed to be spent in defence of money. The whole matter is summed up in one half-page of our precious Jocelin of Brakelond, if we consider his words carefully and read between the lines. He is speaking of Abbot Hugh, "wrapped in his warm flannels and delusions", and preyed upon by the usurers (p. 4).

It came to the ears of abbot Hugh that Richard, Archbishop of Canterbury, was purposed to come and make a scrutiny in our abbey, under his legatine authority; so he took counsel and sent to Rome and obtained exemption from the power of the said legate. When the messenger came back to us from Rome, we found no means of paying what he had promised to the lord pope and his cardinals, except [by taking], among the things which stood at hand, the cross over the high altar and the images of Mary and John which Archbishop Stigand had adorned with a great weight of gold and silver and had given to St Edmund. Moreover, some of the brethren who had more familiar friendship with the abbot said that the very shrine of St Edmund should be stripped of its gold and silver and jewels [*excrustari*] for the sake of this freedom. They marked not that such freedom might beget great peril, since, if perchance there were one among us whose will it were to squander the abbey's goods and to maltreat his community, there would be no man to whom the brethren could complain against the abbot's injustices; for he will fear neither bishop nor archbishop nor legate, and impunity will beget boldness to sin.

It is, indeed, difficult to exaggerate the weight of this consideration. Mr Snape emphasizes the difficulty of controlling a

¹ *The Apostolic Camera*, p. xxiv; cf. pp. xxix, xxxv, lxxix.

wasteful abbot or prior (p. 61). In 1149, the monks of Winchester impleaded the bishop (who was, of course, their abbot by constitutional law) for "excrustation" of the great processional cross of his cathedral.¹ We may conclude with a Scottish case. The Archbishop of St Andrews represented to Sixtus IV (1473) that the Abbot of Kelso

for the reason that his abbey is exempt from ordinary jurisdiction, supposing himself to have been granted a freer power of transgression, is disposing of the goods of that monastery at his own will and pleasure, otherwise than is decent, and is committing crimes and excesses and satisfying his creditors when and how he pleases, and in no other way. . . to the scandal of many folk.

He therefore petitioned that its exemption might be revoked, and likewise the exemptions of St Giles's at Edinburgh and St Salvator's at St Andrews, in order that the heads and the brethren might thus be conduced "to lead a religious and honest life, fitting to the state of things, to preserve the goods of the monasteries and of St Giles and St Salvator, and refrain in other ways from things unlawful. . . and perform divine service". The laity, pursues the archbishop, are driven by these abuses to murmur and speak ill, and to petition to the Holy See against these scandals: the revocation of exemptions would probably be effective. The pope acceded to his request, by formally annulling all three exemptions.²

¹ Wharton, 1, 300. Cf. the dilapidator-abbot of St Mary Graces in 1427 (*V.C.H. London*, 1, 463).

² A. Theiner, *Vet. Monum. Hib. et Scot.* 1864, p. 470.

CHAPTER XXX

LITIGATION

THIS comes out even more clearly when we look into the subject of monastic litigation, which was one of the most important drains upon the monastic exchequer. Quarrels between brethren and brethren were frequent; not only do satirists like Langland allude to this, but the visitors' reports and the chronicles themselves bear witness to it. It is notoriously difficult to avoid quarrels where men or women are confined together for any long period within a comparatively small compass, as on ship-board or under the old-fashioned college system; and that difficulty was proportionately increased when the association was life-long, without hope of relief. When we think not only of the pious and devoted few, but of the many monks who had drifted more or less casually into this vocation, we must see how natural it was that there should be occasional clashes within the same walls, and still more with neighbours, whether lay or clerical, whose financial or social interests ran in contrary directions. In any case, monastic records thoroughly justify the medieval proverb that he who has lands has war on his hands—*qui terram habet, guerram habet*—or, again, Peter the Venerable's plea that, if the monks took St Paul's precept so literally as to refuse help from the law-courts in defence of their possessions, they would soon cease to be possessors.¹

There were some, of course, who were quite prepared to cease to be possessors. St Stephen, founder of the Order of Grammont [1073], was willing to go back almost to the naked simplicity of the Fathers of the Desert. Apart from his objection to herds and flocks as involving his monks in worldly business, he felt that even personal affection for animals was a hindrance to his ideal: "if ye had beasts, ye would doubtless love them; and, whatsoever love ye showed to the cattle, so much of affection to God would be taken away from you." This, after all, was logically implied in his puritanical ideal; it fits in with that sentence of St John Chrysostom which later monks some-

¹ Bricot, p. 48; *P.L.* CLXXXIX, col. 147.

times repeated to their brethren: "Christ was crucified for thy sins, and dost thou laugh?"¹ St Bernard, again, Peter the Venerable's friend, was prepared to meet his dilemma with the downright reply: "Then let us cease to possess." Peter of Blois [1190] expresses the difficulty of reconciling the monastic ideal with a system which rested upon strict legalism, with force in the background.

It is a thing full of danger to nourish a proud retinue from the spoils of the poor: it would be safer for me to be humbled with the poor than to divide spoils with the proud. Are not the spoils of the poor those oblations and tithes which I [an abbot] extort violently from poor folk by the fear of the Church's curses?... What shall I say of taxes and exactions, of the fines from my law-courts and other wicked extortions?²

But it was too much to expect of flesh and blood that it should face such renunciation as this rhetoric implies. Béziat shows us the abbot and three monks of Caunes journeying from their newly founded abbey in Languedoc to obtain confirmation of their endowments by Charlemagne at Frankfort-on-the-Main.³ The prize was worth so painful a journey: a great part of the revenues of ten villages, with forest-land and other smaller items; which of us would have refused it? In a society which was already advancing towards capitalism in something of the modern sense, it is not surprising that none but a small minority of radical reformers attempted complete conformity with the strict Rule which St Benedict had composed in a far more primitive age, and that even such radicals were, in the second generation, rapidly falling into line with the rest.

This was noted with pain by pious contemporaries. As early as the ninth century it is dealt with in German Church law. The imperial emissaries are thus instructed:

Again, they must enquire how that man has renounced the world who, led by covetousness, for the sake of getting the goods which he

¹ E. Martène, *Antiq. Mon. Rit.* p. 310, c. 7; *P.L.* cciv, col. 1143; Chrysostom, *Hom. XVII on Ephesians*, § 2. Compare the *Lives of the Fathers* (Migne, *P.L.* LXXIII, col. 864): "An old monk saw one laughing, and said unto him, 'We are to render account of our whole life before the Lord of heaven and earth, and dost thou laugh?'" Cf. *ibid.* col. 861, and the quotation in my first volume, pp. 470-1.

² Ep. 102, written in the person of a Benedictine abbot.

³ *Caunes*, pp. 8-10.

seeth in another's possession, hires men to perjury and false witness, and seeks as advocate or seneschal not a just man that feareth God, but one that is cruel in covetousness and careless of perjury, and who enquireth not how possessions are gotten, but how much is gotten.¹

Hugh of St-Victor [1120] writes with indignant scorn of the litigious monk: he puts lawsuits into the sixth place among the twelve worst abuses of the cloister.² Abbot Gilles li Muisis [1350] complains how "nowadays," in consequence of luxury and worldliness of abbots, there are constant quarrels about elections: "appeals are made to Reims or to Rome, and many great sums are spent from church goods...the advocates are sorry when the case is so soon finished; they had set about sucking them altogether dry."³ The University of Oxford, in 1414, complained to Henry V of the waste caused by monastic litigation: "seeing that, among exempt Religious, there arise detestable quarrels, whereby they are horribly scandalized and diminished, and the possessions and lands granted to them for the service of God are consumed in lawsuits, as is notorious enough in the Cistercian and Cluniac Orders throughout England."⁴

Thus, in almost every monastic monograph which enters at all into details, we find lawsuits multiplying as possessions increase. The case for the monks cannot be put better than by Canon Clement Price in his introduction to the *Worcester Book of Pensions*:⁵

It must be acknowledged that there is a certain atmosphere of dispute and litigation throughout the Liber. The Convent, like all corporations and not a few individuals, had an eye to the main chance, and were always anxious to stand to their rights. At the same time it must in fairness be said that the documents leave a clear impression of honour and justice in all the business arrangements dealt with, and also that in days of rough, violent and forceful methods this constant appeal to law which they reveal is not to be counted a discredit, indeed rather the reverse. The spirit of law was gradually feeling its way into the general life, and it was the part of

¹ *M.G.H. Leges*, I, 167 (1835).

² *P.L.* CLXXVI, col. 1069.

³ Li Muisis, I, 160. The extent to which litigation was definitely encouraged by the system of Papal Provisions is brought out by Dr Cameron in her *Apostolic Camera and the Scottish Benefices* (introd. p. lxix).

⁴ Wilkins, III, 363, § 22.

⁵ *Worcs. Hist. Soc.* 1925, p. xiii.

all profitable members of the church and commonwealth to foster that tendency and to submit on all necessary occasions to its influence and operations. But it is evident that the monasteries had need to be wealthy corporations to hold up against the expense involved in their constant suits.

Francisque Michel remarks, in his edition of the *Chronique de St-Ouen*, "it is almost entirely filled with the details of the lawsuits which this monastery had to carry out for the maintenance of its rights."¹ Yet, in some of the most important cases, even the monk's own story leaves us in doubt how far the brethren were right in law. The frequency of the cases, however, is incontestable; and, it may be added, their costliness. One plea cost them 6000 *livres*; another 5000. The greatest of the abbots, to whom we owe the magnificent church, spent 13,000 *livres* in lawsuits during his reign of thirty-six years. Again, even the early Cistercian records (1116-1220) show "numerous cases of disputes between abbeys over property, many of them in England and Wales. Bad blood arose over questions of precedence."² Mr J. S. Fletcher writes of that same reformed Order:

Vast sums were spent in litigation... Not even the expenses consequent upon borrowing money could ever have involved the eight houses in such waste of wealth as resulted from the constant litigation. That was always going on—the records are full of it. Gasquet would have us believe that it was only "such as will happen between men of all classes", but it was more. The houses were always at law, not only with laymen, but with ecclesiastics, from bishops down to country parsons; nay, one house thought nothing of going to law with another house.³

Mr J. S. Purvis, again, in the preface to his recently published volume, while carefully avoiding to plead a case for or against the abbeys, lays equal emphasis on the prominence of litigation.

It may be supposed that legal business such as that implied in these Chancery pleas may have contributed not a little to embarrass

¹ *Chronique de St-Ouen*, pp. vi, 3, 5, 22. The *livre tournois*, in which one chronicler nearly always counts, was worth one-fifth of the £1 sterling of these days.

² *E.H.R.* XLIX (1934), 327.

³ *Cistercians in Yorkshire*, pp. 117, 181; cf. pp. 118, 122, 125, 131, 134, 136. One Kirkstall lawsuit lasted over 100 years (p. 125). Once, however, in 1310, we find the Abbots of Roche and Whalley referring their dispute to the arbitration of the General Chapter (p. 129).

monastic finances, since, of the fifty-three religious establishments in Yorkshire represented here, each, on a rough average, appeared in Chancery once in every ten years of the forty preceding the Dissolution; and this quite apart from other legal business.¹

Similar statistics stare us in the face from all the chartularies and registers. Let us take at random the papal registers as early as 1050. Out of the fifty-three entries for that year in Jaffe's collection, twenty-three are general letters of protection for abbey, and six are special letters directed against the spoilers of particular houses: the monasteries thus occupy more than half of the pope's attention. In all those cases the monks were nominally, and in nearly all they were doubtless factually, acting merely in self-defence against greedy outsiders gaping for their spoils. Again, let us turn to the great collection of French mediæval lawsuits called *Olim*. In the first volume of that collection, the index shows us the following results under the headings *contentio*, *damna*, *injuriæ*, *violentia*: out of 122 cases, fifty-one are concerned with monasteries. A glance at the second volume will show much the same results. We need not enquire, for our present purpose of placing litigation in its true rank among items of monastic expenditure, which party was mainly at fault in those pleas, or whether justice and injustice may be equally divided between the monks and their adversaries. The point is that the enormous extent of monastic possessions, and the enormous variety of their titles to such possessions, under feudal law which rested far more upon custom and far less upon written documents than at present, exposed them to many expenses which were practically unavoidable, even though the monks themselves had felt repugnance for litigation. Finally, quite apart from such a purely monastic collection as Mr Purvis's, the general calendars of Chancery Petitions, embracing the whole country, tell much the same tale. The first two volumes published by our Government run from [1386] to [1484], they contain 22,769 cases, comprising every possible variety of quarrel and of person; 554 of these are monastic.

Between monk and monk—for it very frequently happened

Monastic Chancery Proceedings (Yorks Archaeol. Soc. Record Series),
XXVIII (1934), p. v.

that one house's claims clashed with those of another¹—there was sometimes arbitration, though not so often as we might expect. Dom Berlière has studied the part played by confraternities between different monasteries in leading to the settlement of quarrels. He quotes how, “in 1074, a conflict which had arisen between the abbeys of St-Serge and St-Aubin at Angers was judged by five abbots of the principal houses of Anjou; and, in 1292, in a quarrel which had arisen between the abbot and monks of Cornelimünster, sentence was given by the neighbouring abbots”. He quotes also the case of St-Vincent-de-Laon, which had treaties of arbitration with six other abbeys and he appears to assert that similar arbitration treaties were to be found in “a great number of associations for prayer, or confraternities, from the eleventh century onwards”; but all the specific instances which he gives refer to smaller matters, such as the reception at one house of monks banished from another or the acceptance of an associated abbot as arbiter in a domestic quarrel.²

Again, the General Chapters sometimes played this part of pacificators. A decree of the English Benedictine General Chapter of 1343 begins by contrasting the early Church, when all were of one heart and of one soul, with “these days wherein the malice of man increaseth, and our Religion is trampled under foot and its possessions are given over to spoliation and robbery.” Therefore all Benedictine prelates⁴ must stand manfully together “nor join, whether secretly or openly, with any man whom they

¹ Here, for instance, is a case for which many parallels could be found. Adam Fitz-Peter [1150] granted to the monks of Rievaulx, as “alms”, by charter, “that I and my heirs will never settle [*recolligemus*] men of any Religion, except those of Rievaulx, in any township or land or pasture wherein I have given to the said monks of Rievaulx any land or pasture or mine” (*Rievaulx Chartulary*, Surtees Soc. 1889, p. 57).

² *Confraternités, etc.*, especially pp. 5, 6, 12, 13.

³ About 1212, when a Flemish abbey had to send a *vidimus* of a papal bull to a judge as business voucher, it took special precautions “because these days are evil and the times are abominable, and church privileges and indulgences cannot be brought from place to place without great peril” (Van Lokeren, pt. II, p. 13).

⁴ It must be remembered that “*prelatus*”, in medieval language, applied in certain contexts to everybody in ecclesiastical authority: even a priest was sometimes *prelatus* in relation to his parishioners. Here, therefore, it included priors as well as abbots.

know as adversary of any house or any person of our Order". It proceeds:

If, however, any great question or controversy should arise among any prelates of monasteries, or between the prelates and their convents, we will that these be referred to the visitors of those houses or to the presidents of the latest General Chapter; and let these forthwith give directions to some of the neighbouring abbots or others, by whose intervention an amicable composition may be made between the parties, and peace and concord may be concluded without any public commotion; and if, perchance, this cannot thus be done, let the decision of all this difficulty be deferred to the General Chapter. By this statute, however, we will no prejudice to the royal dignity, to prevent each man from getting a proper decision in favour of his own rights [in the king's courts].¹

Such judicial decisions are, in fact, to be found here and there among the Chapter Acts of different Orders; and we should doubtless find a good many more, but that the surviving MSS. have been transcribed by or for monks who took little interest in concrete cases of distant houses. Yet there is no record suggesting that the cases thus settled without public litigation—*absque strepitu iudicii*, in the consecrated phrase—were even approaching in number to those in which the whole neighbourhood witnessed some monastic lawsuit. Rare, again, are the cases where it is recorded, as at Laon (utilized by Berlière), that the abbey of St-Vincent made formal arbitration treaties with neighbouring abbeys. "Recognizing that the interlacing of territories is an unquenchable source of lawsuits, the two abbots agreed that each abbey should choose two monks in its associated abbey, in order to settle by the judgement of these four persons every difference which might arise."²

Rarer still, I think, are such systems of *amicabilis concordia* between two Orders. The Gilbertines, at their beginning, were honourably distinguished here.

To preserve unity among the houses of the Order, the Rule strictly forbade them to dispute about property; if one house received lands lying near another house, it was bound to deliver them to that

¹ Pantin, II, 54. In 1310, Roche and Whalley, both Cistercian, referred their quarrel to the General Chapter (Fletcher, p. 129).

² Wyard, p. 426; cf. p. 442 (1185 and [1200] A.D.).

house for due compensation. If any house were oppressed by the heavy burden of poverty, the charity and mercy of the other houses were to assist it.

That, it is true, was only for domestic peace; but, far beyond this,

“for the keeping of peace and charity”, a solemn agreement “in the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”, was drawn up between the chapters of Cîteaux and Sempringham in 1164. It was signed by seven Cistercian Abbots including Ailred of Rievaulx, by Gilbert of Sempringham and several of his Priors. The most obvious source of dispute was the acquisition of lands. Cistercian and Gilbertine houses arose within a short distance of one another; Louth Park was close to Alvingham, Kym to Bullington.... The agreement provided that no one of either chapter might build a grange or sheepfold within two leagues of a grange or sheepfold of the other Order....

On account of the distance from Cîteaux at which the Cistercian chapter met, it was arranged that three abbots should be appointed with full power to settle disputes, with three Gilbertine priors “of wise counsel”. The hearing of the quarrel might not be carried elsewhere, until they had met at least twice, and failed to arbitrate. The agreement between Louth Park and Alvingham fixed a tribunal. If the brothers of Louth Park broke the pact, the Abbots of Fountain Kirkstead and S. Laurence were to make it of force; failing them, the Cistercian chapter. The Abbots of Kirkstead and S. Laurence, the Priors of Haverholme and Sixhills, were to compel the brothers of Alvingham to make amends within forty days; if they were unable the obligation lay on the chapter of Sempringham; in the last resort on the Bishop and chapter of Lincoln.¹

So, again, in [1154] a *conventio karitatis* was drawn up, and confirmed in 1170, between Rievaulx and Byland, whose territories were conterminous, in order to obviate trespasses and quarrels between the tenants on either side.²

Sometimes, again, we find individual abbots as enders of litigation; they are chosen as arbitrators by contending outsiders and succeed in securing a peaceful decision.³ And one case is recorded where a great lord strove for peace. Guillaume, lord

¹ Rose Graham, *St Gilbert, etc.* pp. 130ff. We shall see, however, in the next chapter, that even these wise and charitable provisions were not completely effectual.

² *V.C.H. Yorks*, III, 150.

³ *E.g.* the abbot of la Grâce-Dieu in 1295 (Richard, p. 51); cf. Murba in Gatrio, I, 316.

Talmont, prescribed admirably for the tenants of those domains which he gave to the abbey of Ste-Croix.

If discord should arise between Us and Our neighbours, and trouble should ensue (which God forbid!), let not the men of Ste-Croix be summoned or called upon to go and slay men, or to spoil and lay waste the lands of Christian folk, nor to build castles or ramparts, nor let them be forced in any way, but let them labour in peace, quit from all perturbation of war, nor let them be disturbed by prosecution in any matter. For instance, let the friends who act on their behalf keep peace with all men, even with the enemies to peace. But, if our enemies should invade Our territory, then let all go to defend their own possessions from the enemy.¹

Again, we must not neglect the numerous cases where monks avoided the law-courts by consenting to a compromise which nearly always took the form of a ready-money payment to buy the claimant off. I had occasion to point out, in Chapter III, how often such compromises were made when heirs tried to go back upon their dead parents' grants of land to an abbey. But, here again, the result, however creditable from the point of view of pacificism or of business sagacity, goes to confirm our main reason for emphasizing this side of monastic finance. The possession of money entails always and everywhere the spending of money in its defence; and that was more especially true amid the disorders of medieval society. Therefore, though the monastic chronicler sometimes commends this or that abbot as lover of peace, he is more often moved to admiration, naturally enough, for the manful champion of his abbey's rights. The Canterbury chronicler Thorne, under the year 1343, writes of his own abbot that "this William [Drulege] was of little stature like Zacchaeus, but robust and immense in the protection and defence of the rights of his abbey". That, again, is why so many law-books were to be found in monastic libraries, and why popes had to forbid the attendance of monks at university lectures on law; a prohibition which was by no means universally obeyed.² A great monastery, again, would keep one or more lawyers on the premises, or at least within easy call. We have seen this in the remarkable case of Peter of Denne at St

¹ *Luçon*, I, 381.

² See my second volume, p. 434, and *Medieval Village*, p. 143 n.

Augustine's, Canterbury (Chapter xxii). More remarkable still, Capgrave records a complaint of the monks of Bury, in [1344], against Bishop Bateman of Norwich, the founder of Trinity Hall at Cambridge. "He compelled those clergy whom the abbot kept as his table-companions and counsellors to reside personally [in their own benefices], in order that the abbot might be bereft of [legal] advice, and obey his injunctions."¹ It speaks volumes that the enforcement of statutory residence on these absentees should lend itself to such an invidious interpretation.

Here, again, I must remind my readers of the more frequent causes of friction in a society which rested so much upon customary law, with its consequent variety—we may even often say, its eccentricity—of customs.² A few instances will suffice here, in corroboration of the many I have supplied in my *Medieval Village*.

There was, first, that struggle over rents which is an almost inseparable accompaniment of landlordism in any form. The editor of the register of St Benet of Holme notes that "the abbey was uniformly trying to increase its revenue by exacting larger rents on the occasions when the grants of manors were renewed."³ This might lead to very serious friction. In 1287, a charter confirmed the right of the abbot of Münster to send his sergeant to confiscate the house-door of any tenant who delayed payment of his rent beyond the appointed day.⁴ Tithes, again, "that inexhaustible source of bickering under the *Ancien Régime*",⁵ were perhaps the most fertile source of quarrels and litigation in all medieval history. "The minute-books of old-time notaries astound us with the frequent prosecutions instituted by the abbey [of St Antoine-de-Vienne] against its farmers, who do not render the tithe-corn in either the quantity or the quality agreed

¹ *Nova Legenda Anglie*, II, 674.

² There is a tendency among modern writers to minimize the disadvantages of customary law, in natural reaction from the exaggerated blame of past generations. The question is admirably discussed by Professor M. Bloch in his *Caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française* (Oslo, 1931), p. 73. He shows how customary law must needs rest mainly on immemorial tradition: but, unfortunately, "human memory is a singularly imperfect and malleable instrument; it has a positively marvellous faculty for forgetfulness and, especially, for distortion".

³ *St Benet's*, p. 219.

⁴ Calmet, *Münster*, p. 105.

⁵ *Bricot*, p. 119; cf. pp. 73, 74, and St-André, p. 78.

upon."¹ This was especially true in cases where, sometimes by a mere generous caprice of the donor, tithes had been granted in unusual forms. Count Raymond Bérenger of Provence granted to the monks of Montmajour, in 1193, a privilege which gave rise to quarrels and litigation for at least 350 years. It was, that the fishers of Arles must yield, every year, the *first* sturgeon caught in the Rhone. When we consider the value of such a prize to any particular fisherman, and the difficulty of fixing exact priority, we need not wonder at the friction caused by this grant.² Again, many disputes were encouraged by the medieval tradition of what German legists have called "natural measures". Of these I have given many in my *Medieval Village*: here is another. A royal statute made at Perth in 1177 insisted upon the customary law that, in fishing rivers, "the midstream was always to be free to the extent that a swine of three years old, well-fed, could not touch either side with its head or its tail". In Cumberland, the royal assize of 1278 dealt with four cases in which riparian owners had narrowed the stream where "by ancient custom there ought to be a pass wide enough for a sow with her five little pigs"; and the monks of Wetheral, in 1293, were impleaded for violation of this very measurement. In 1372, we find the measurement at last expressed in terms of feet; and when the measure became a matter of statute law (1394), the question was left to the discretion of the justices, who were to insist upon "a reasonable opening, according to ancient custom".³ Finally, I supply in my Appendix the report of a case which illustrates the occasional eccentricities of medieval contracts.

In all those cases the monks may claim our whole or divided sympathy: but one fertile source of quarrels and expenditure cannot be seriously defended. We have seen how St Bernard and other great churchmen deplored the mania for pontifical insignia among abbots, from the point of view of ordinary Christian humility. But such ambitions, growing by what they fed on, led also to some misuse at any time, and to almost insane waste in extreme cases, of revenues that had been given for religion and

¹ Maillet-Guy, *Paroisses*, p. 28.

² *Congrès Archéol. de France*, XLIII session (Arles, 1876), p. 636.

³ *V.C.H. Cumberland*, II, 335-6.

charity. The historian of St-Martin at Autun explains very clearly the genesis of that rivalry which caused almost incessant friction between his abbots and the bishops: two prelates who lived within a stone's throw of each other and might have been presumed to be natural allies. Abbot William (1225-65)

obtained from Alexander IV the right of wearing pontifical ornaments (mitre, ring, gloves, sandals and dalmatic), the right of giving solemn benediction in his own church, and of being called by the title of prelate. Thus he placed himself most conspicuously upon a footing of equality with bishops, and belied the title with which he began his charters, *Minister humilis monasterii*. These distinctions of honour were loudly reprobated by St Bernard, and refused by several bishops as incompatible with the vow of humility; but, after having been first granted by popes in reward for services rendered to the Church or as a testimonial of particular esteem for heads of Orders, or abbots of eminent talents or character, had finally become common in the twelfth century; and many had bought with money that which would never have been granted to their bare merit. These concessions, when granted to abbeys situated within or hard by any episcopal city, rarely failed to excite the jealousy of the bishops. They were pained to see dignitaries arise by their side who were invested with the same prerogatives, who often possessed greater wealth, and who, through the numerous houses dependent on their abbeys, ruled a sort of diocese within the diocese. Here was a fresh element of discord between the bishops and abbots, who were already at war on the subject of monastic exemptions. The abbots sought to draw from these pontifical privileges a support for their independence; the bishops found therein one more motive of attack.¹

Here is another case. The abbots of St-Germain d'Auxerre litigated for centuries with the bishops about the wearing of pontifical insignia and precedence on certain solemn occasions. In [1200] (writes Canon Henry) the prior and a few monks

advised the abbot to abandon his [pontifical] insignia, rather than undertake a ruinous lawsuit. The rest of the brethren thought that he ought to defend his privileges; and so he did. The suit soon absorbed all the resources of the abbey. The expenses became so heavy that the abbot was obliged to fall back upon the gold and precious stones from the shrines of St Germain, of the pope St Urban,

¹ Bulliot, p. 247; cf. p. 252.

of St Aunaire and St Didier. They grew and grew; and he sold the forest of St-Sauveur. To obtain permission for this sale from his suzerain, Count Hervé [of Nevers], he was compelled to abandon half the price to him... All these resources having been exhausted, [he proceeded, by papal licence, to sell a limited freedom to many of his serfs]. He imitated those lords who, under pressing need, sold these same rights. It would have been more honourable to grant these favours gratuitously for God's sake, as other abbeys did.

Yet all these expenses were indecisive; "this scandal lasted for centuries".¹ And not only saints were scandalized by this, but the ordinary decent monk himself might deplore the silly ambitions of his own brethren. The Limoges chronicler records a quarrel of six or seven years about precedence at a religious procession, which the arbitrator at last settled on the terms that "we monks of St-Martial should give 35 *livres* to the canons [of the cathedral], who should make their Palm Sunday procession wheresoever they would. Thus one party sold and the other bought God's honour, lest they should honour Him on the day whereon the Lord was sold."²

The scandals of litigation, and (what alone concerns us directly at this point) its expenses, were increased by the notorious corruption of the law-courts. The story passed from one medieval sermon-book to another of that famous advocate who, having taken the cowl for the salvation of his soul, and being therefore unwilling to stoop to lies and deception, lost all the cases which he pleaded for the brethren, "so that he was permitted [thenceforward] to rest in the cloister, and was never again sent forth to plead."³

Bribery was, it may almost be said, a matter of course. When Langland complained that "Lady Meed"—the Almighty Dollar—ruled the world of his own particular day, this com-

¹ Henry, pp. 236-8. The author's generalization as to other abbeys is, however, false; in nearly every case for which we have documentary evidence, the abbeys sold liberties as dearly as in this; see *Medieval Village*, chs. XIII-XIV. Moreover, Henry's own documents contradict him here; in subsequent pages he can name not a single case of gratuitous emancipation, whereas he records large sums raised at different times by selling liberties to whole communities of abbey serfs (pp. 300, 310, 325, 330, 344, 345, 346, 376).

² *St-Martial*, p. 160.

³ Vitry, *Exempla* (1890), p. 20; Bourbon, p. 382, where however there seems a misreading of *ut* for *ne*. Elsewhere (p. 19) Cardinal de Vitry writes of the temptations to fraud in monastic life.

plaint had by no means the novelty which modern authors sometimes attribute to it.¹

That money was supreme in all judicial matters was clearly assumed when the Abbey of Andres quarrelled with the mother-house of Charroux, and the latter assured the former that it could spend in any court one hundred marks of silver against every ten livres that the other could afford; and in effect, when the ten years' litigation was over, including three appeals to Rome, Andres found itself oppressed with the enormous debt of fourteen hundred livres *parisis*, while the details of the transaction show the most unblushing bribery. The Roman Court set the example to the rest, and its current reputation is visible in the praise bestowed on Eugenius III for rebuking a prior who had commenced a suit before him by offering a mark of gold to win his favour.²

St Bernard wrote very plainly on the subject to this pontiff, his former pupil. He pointed out how difficult it was to reconcile a pope's judicial activities with certain strict Gospel precepts which were followed in the early Church. The best that can be said in defence of the then clergy was

So be it; another custom hath become ingrained among us; other manners among men, perilous times, are now no longer impending but have fallen upon us. Fraud and circumvention and violence have come to reign upon earth. Many are the false claimants, and few the defenders, everywhere the poorer folk are oppressed by the more powerful; we cannot desert the oppressed, or deny judgement to them that suffer wrong.

But let causes be decided briefly, and with as little of the paid advocate as possible:

Let the cause of the widow come before thee, the cause of the poor man and of him who hath not wherewith to give... The Church is full of ambition; in these days of ours, the aims and strivings of ambition excite no horror; no more than a den of thieves shrinks from the spoils of the wayfarers.³

¹ *E.g.* even Mr Christopher Dawson in his *Medieval Religion*, p. 172. Marriage and divorce, for instance, which were reserved for the Church courts, were notorious matters of bribery: Petrus Cantor [1190] writes "for money's sake, at our own choice, we [clergy] join or separate whom we will". For other evidence see Appendix.

² H. C. Lea, *Inq. of Middle Ages*, 1887, I, 22.

³ *De Consideratione*, bk. I, c. 10.

A century later the corruption of the law-courts through bribery drew a still more desperate cry from St Edmund Rich, Archbishop of Canterbury (1234 to 1240): "Christendom is corrupt nowadays; and, unless Christians study to cure themselves of this plague, Christendom will be ruined before they are aware."¹ That which these saints reprobated stands out plainly in business records. "Gifts" to judges are recorded in monastic account-rolls as in civic registers. At Ely, for instance, the accounts for 1474 record: "Given to Broghtton, sheriff of Cambridgeshire, in order that he might show his favour to the prior of Ely in certain cases, £2." Of the other rolls Canon Stewart writes: "Some of these entries show that bribes were given in a very business-like way, and without any attempt at concealment." So also Bishop Pearce, writing of fourteenth-century Westminster: "Some of these gifts might be called bribes, if they were not so openly presented and so candidly reckoned as part of a year's charges."² At St Albans, the chronicler records with glee how his abbot had out-bribed a briber in court.³ The monk of Meaux describes how his abbey, in [1360], had a great lawsuit with the serfs on its estates, "in which plea all the king's officers and ministers in the court did all they could to lay obstacles and stumbling-blocks in our abbot's path, save only the chancellor, whose favour the abbot barely succeeded in buying with gifts."⁴ This chancellor was no other than Edyngton, predecessor of William of Wykeham both in the see and in the chancery, and in the great work of remodelling the cathedral church.

The extent to which a great abbot could persuade the king's judges to pervert justice in his favour is emphasized by Tout and Johnstone, *State Trials of Ed. I*, 1906, p. xl. They comment: "a more flagrant case of favour and 'maintenance' [conspiracy against justice] can hardly be imagined." It was natural, therefore, that when Edward I, in 1290, determined to purge his law-courts, by wholesale depositions and fines against offending justices, "he compelled the justices whom he set in their place

¹ Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Hist.* lib. xxxi, c. 82 (ed. Douai, p. 1313). St Edmund is still worshipped at Pontigny in Burgundy, where the Cistercians had received him as an exile.

² Stewart's *Ely*, p. 214; *Wenlok*, p. 94; cf. p. 164.

³ *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. III, 318 (1340).

⁴ *Chron. Melsa*, R.S. III, 141; cf. p. 135.

to take an oath that, from henceforth, they would not accept pensions or fees from the Religious, nor a fee from any man, nor any gift whatsoever except the day's refection or a gift in terms of refection".¹

But the fountain-head of bribery was the Roman Curia itself, and the Church courts. The Abbot of Evesham tells, in the most natural way, how he bought the favour of Innocent III, in an important case, with a silver goblet worth six marks.² Archbishop Pecham of Canterbury (1284) complained to the Bishop of Tusculum that the pope's judgement had been influenced in a case by "two basins filled with gold florins".³ On the other hand, his brother-prelate Romeyn of York [1286] promised £13. 13s. 4d. yearly to one of the Cardinals at the Court, as the price of his favour.⁴ Humbert de Romans, the contemporary General of the Dominicans, wrote of "the corruption of gifts, which nowadays corrupt almost all courts".⁵ In his memorial to the pope for the Second Ecumenical Council of Lyons (1274), among the most intolerable sores of the Church, he specifies the fact that "pardoners corrupt the prelates with bribes".⁶ In a similar memorial of the University of Paris to the Council of Constance it was complained that prelates "take money to tolerate their subjects in their sins", and that the officials of the Church courts are corrupt.⁷ One of the greatest fathers at that Council was Cardinal Zabarella, of whom his biographer assures us that he never took bribes.⁸ It is well known that this was also one of Sir Thomas More's titles to fame. Archdeacons were notorious above all for their dependence upon bribery.

Among Gascoigne's severest strictures upon the monks of his day [1450] he writes:

Wherefore are these superfluous goods annexed to the monasteries and churches, not given to other [parish] churches that are in need, in order that their necessity be sustained by the superabundance of

¹ *Joh. Oxenedes*, R.S. p. 252.

² *Chron. Evesh.* R.S. p. 142.

³ *Epistolae*, R.S. II, 681. At another time, he mildly rebukes the Bishop of Worcester for sending him gifts; at another, he seeks for a special purpose "two Dominican brethren, two Franciscans, and one or two secular clergy who have learned to keep their hands clean from all gifts" (*ibid.* pp. 723-4).

⁴ *Reg. Romeyn*, II, 140.

⁵ *Max. Bib. Patrum*, xxv, 560.

⁶ Labbe-Mansi, xxiv, 130ff.; pars III, c. 8.

⁷ H. Finke, *Acta Conc. Const.* I.

⁸ V. d. Hardt, I, ix, 549.

monasteries and [greater] churches? But alas, alas! for gifts blind the eyes of judges, and the greed for temporal goods blindeth a man's understanding and his judgement of the truth.

Moreover, he goes on to specify a case within his own knowledge, which we have no reason to discount for more than the ordinary medieval exaggeration.

Lately, a prior of a Religious house who had sixteen churches appropriated to his monastery, gave and granted a great annual pension to a certain lawyer who executes episcopal mandates in high office at the Court Christian; and this same prior gave this lawyer the right of presentation to all those churches, on condition that he should defend him against all such vicars and parishioners as should impeach the prior in the bishop's court for anything that he did in those churches appropriated to his priory, and in order that this wicked man should give judgement in the prior's favour; and therefore these folk seek a remedy from the law of the realm.

Again, a little later:

For one very great gain accruing to the papal court nowadays, among others, is this: that the pope (or those to whom he commits cases) grant and adjudge many things in favour of one party, and forthwith, under influence of money, revoke those first concessions, and sometimes they revoke and revoke again many times, so that there is no definite end to a matter of appeal to Rome. . . . Some men believe the Roman Court to be so covetous that, if the pope deny or be unwilling to do their will or grant such things as bring lucre to the courtiers, then the officers and courtiers themselves will publicly slay him or secretly poison him. For, within the last few years, as men have said, they have poisoned Alexander [V] and Eugenius [IV].¹

There, no doubt, we have no more than the medieval habit of suspecting poison when any man's death was obviously advantageous to others.

In this world of money the monk's revenues gave him great legal advantages: and he knew it. As a 13th-century abbot says:

Fear not your poverty, or the costs of litigation; for, if we care to pledge our manors, or if we desire to borrow from the Jews on usury or from Romans at the pope's court under statutory penalties, we shall find men to lend us whatsoever we need, up to a thousand marks

¹ *Lib. Ver.* pp. 72, 147, 153. For further references as to the ubiquity of bribery, see Appendix.

or more, under pledge of our chapter seal; for our community is, as it were, immortal. And we will borrow money at a long date [of repayment] and shall not be scattered abroad. The bishop, on the other hand, will find no man to take any manor of his by way of pledge, nor to lend him money beyond a small sum; for, if the bishop died, the pledge would at once be freed, and, unless the creditor could prove to demonstration that the money had been spent on the necessary uses of his see, his successor would not be bound to pay the debt; therefore we can run to more expense than the bishop.¹

¹ *Chron. Evesham*, R.S. p. 113.

CHAPTER XXXI

TRIAL BY BATTLE

MOREOVER, quite apart from the monk's advantage in the law courts as a capitalist, his religious advantages might well encourage him in litigious propensities. The Abbot of St-Hubert, in 1091, refused to give evidence on oath for his own exculpation; and, after due consultation, the court decided to excuse him on the ground that "the monastic Order was one of apostolic vocation, and by authority of the Gospels it should suffice for the abbot to say *Yea* or *No*, since our Lord forbade all swearing, and that which is over and above these, is of evil". True, this was in a political case; but it is easy to see what advantage the monk might gain in many other matters by this kind of argument.¹

Consider, again, an abbot's chances of gaining the imperial or royal ear on occasions difficult or impossible for other folk. The contemporary chronicler of Battle abbey is an admirable witness here. In 1154, shortly after Henry II's coronation, the abbot obtained from him a promise of confirmation for the abbey's charters: these constant and costly confirmations by kings or popes of what their predecessors had already decreed or confirmed are, in themselves, eloquent as to the labyrinths of medieval justice. The Bishop of Chichester protested against these charters as infringing his privileges; and the archbishop (says our chronicler) lent too ready an ear to plausible pleas, and refused his own consent. The king, unwilling to offend the prelate who but the other day had crowned and anointed him, forbade his chancellor to affix the royal seal.

"What need of many words", writes the distressed chronicler: "fame, scattered through the mouths of the multitude, swiftly bore this to our abbot's ears. Therefore on the morrow's dawn he sought

¹ *St-Hubert*, p. 283. As even orthodox theologians like Petrus Cantor sometimes admitted, it seemed impossible to justify the ordinary medieval treatment of Christ's words on this subject of swearing. For, within a generation, men were being burned within this very district for heretical tenets, one of which was that same literal interpretation of Christ's words which our abbot had successfully invoked for his own protection!

the court; but that day the king had gone a-hunting: nothing could be done, and he returned to his own hostel. Next day, at the first rays of dawn, he returned to Westminster; and, waiting there at the altar where the king would hear Mass, he reflected, in great perplexities of thought, on his best course of action. The king came to Mass; and, after the Introit, the abbot addressed him and said: [You promised confirmation, and I know not why it is now refused]. So the king called his chancellor, and commanded that the abbot's charter should be sealed for confirmation. Yet, before he had ceased speaking, lo! the bishop hastened forward, with the precipitation of one who suspected the facts, [and pleaded his own case, with that of the primate]. Yet the king commanded that the charter should be duly sealed, and that bishop, abbot and chancellor should be summoned before the archbishop: that the abbot's charter should then be read in their hearing, and that whatsoever was to be corrected should be corrected by their counsel, after which the abbot might go home to Battle in peace with his charter. If, however, these counsellors should disagree, then the chancellor should keep the abbot's charter in the royal chapel until the king should give judgement on the case. So, when Mass had been sung down to the '*Pax Domini*', then the bishop, receiving the pax from the priest as custom bade, brought it to the king [to kiss], and thence to the abbot, whereat many folk were much amazed."

The formal discussion was held at Lambeth, but without agreement: "howsoever reasonably the abbot resisted, the commotion [of the others] ceased not": the charter was carried off to the limbo of the royal chapel, and

the abbot, by his friends' advice, returned homewards, still not despairing of God's help. The bishop was glad and joyful, hoping that the abbot and convent of Battle had utterly lost confirmation of their charter. But, as it is written, "man proposeth, but God disposeth"; for Christ suffered not that His convent should be shorn of its just privileges, but, in His providential mercy, He restoreth it for the better at an opportune time.

Hugh of Mortimer rebelled and Henry raised a great army to besiege him at Bridgnorth. "The abbot and his friends, seizing this as a fit occasion, resorted thither to the king and, as was proper in such a business, honoured him with gifts, and spoke to him about the charter." When peace had been made, the king freed this at last from its imprisonment and sent it to Battle, "to the joy of the men of the abbey and of their friends,

who rejoiced with immeasurable delight, while their enemies everywhere were drenched in sorrow and confusion".¹

Where bribes and great men's favour failed, then the medieval litigant, whether layman, priest or monk, resorted too frequently to violence.

Here, again, the monk had some excuse in the manners of his time, which was often willing to tolerate or even prescribe trial by battle, long after the law had ceased to approve this with all its formalities. In post-Conquest England, it was one of the Saxon grievances that the Normans so often substituted this trial by battle for trial by jury; and, when municipal charters were granted, one of the most valuable privileges was that of deciding civil pleas in the town's own court, and by jury. When the citizens of Bury St Edmunds revolted against the abbey in 1327, one of the concessions extorted from the abbot was this abolition of trial by battle.² The abbey of Ste-Croix-de-Talmond received all the profits from judicial duels between peasants in its district.³

For here, as so often elsewhere, monastic conservatism overruled monastic kindness. Great abbeys often maintained, as bishops did, their own permanent professional champions: e.g. St-Bavon at Ghent and the Bishops of Salisbury and Hereford

¹ *Chron. de Bello*, 1846, p. 72. This was habitual with Henry II, though he was not an irreligious prince as princes went. He "would scarce lend to God's worship the bare time of consecration in the Mass; and even during that time (perchance by reason of his royal cares and the heavy business of State) he was more busy with his councillors and with talk than with devotion to the sacrament" (Giraldus Cambrensis, *De Instructione Principum*, 1846, p. 72). "He would spend the time [of Mass] in whispering and scribbling pictures" (Radulphus Niger, ed. Anstruther, p. 169). This Westminster scene, strange as it may seem, is quite in consonance with an episode in the life of one of our greatest saints—Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln. Crossing to Normandy to see Richard I on important business, he found him hearing Mass in his new castle of Château-Gaillard. Here the bishop entered into an altercation with the king, shaking him thrice, by the breast of his cloak, with friendly impatience, until he had extorted the customary kiss of recognition from his master; after which, "he walked straight past [the two archbishops and four bishops who sat next] and, taking his stand by the horns of the altar, and casting his eyes with a certain obstinacy to the ground, fixed his mind upon divine service alone" (*Magna Vita S. Hugonis*, R.S. p. 251). At Strassburg, at any rate in the later Middle Ages, a great deal of the burgomaster's business with suitors and assistants was regularly done in his pew during Mass.

² *Memorials of St Edmund's*, R.S. III, 313.

³ *Luçon*, I, 380.

and the Dean and Chapter of Southwell.¹ In 1078, Renaud, Castellan of Craon, with his lady, gave to the abbey of Vendôme "the fighting shields and the money which should be sent to his castle by those who swore upon the sacred relics". "By which," writes Mabillon, "we may understand that the victorious combatants, called 'champions', were wont to offer their arms and the money they had gained from their victories to the Church by the side of the relics of the saints upon whom they had called before joining combat; moreover, that they undertook this when they took their oaths at those relics."² Again, when the citizens of Rouen contested the right of the abbey of St-Ouen to fortify itself (about 1250) and mischievously removed by night what the workmen had built by day, then the abbot "sent to the district of Caux to fetch fourteen men, strong and mighty, and of great defence, who in those days were termed *champions*; and they remained long there at the cost and expense of the said abbot; thus were the walls completed in virtue of his right, and in the teeth of all his enemies".³

It is evident that, in some cases, monasteries had an actual preference for the duel system, so long as it seemed likely to secure success in any particular suit. The Cistercians of Meaux encouraged a neighbouring landowner to litigate with the Benedictines of York concerning certain rights of fishery; they undertook the suit first in his name (for a valuable consideration) and then in their own; in each case they sent a champion into the field, and in the second the fight lasted from dawn to dark. The case ended in a compromise; and the monastic chronicler ruefully contrasts this lame conclusion with the heavy expense of keeping seven fighting men, with their horses and servants, all the time that the duel was pending at York.⁴

A few concrete cases will help to illustrate these facts. Artevaldus or Adrevaldus, monk of Fleury [A.D. 870], relates how an important lawsuit arose between his own monastery and St-Denis. "When the judges had protracted the case for a

¹ Van Lokeren, pt. 1, 77 (A.D. 1167); *Swinfield Rolls*, C.S. 1855, pp. xxiv, xxxiii; *Reg. Romeyn*, 1, 322.

² Mabillon, *Annales*, v, 127.

³ *Chronique de St-Ouen*, p. 8.

⁴ *Chron. Melsa*, R.S. 11, 97-102; summarized in Preface, p. xvii. *Septem tirones*; i.e. young aspirants to knighthood who had not yet been dubbed.

considerable time, since neither party could agree, it was at length decided that a witness should be chosen from each side to take each his oath and then fight with clubs and shields for the settlement of this dispute." This (writes our monk) commanded universal approval, except that a lawyer "who had been bribed to come in defence of St-Denis" protested that it would be more equitable to come to an understanding, and to share between Fleury and St-Denis the serfs concerning whose possession they were litigating. This wicked man persuaded the bench; but St Benedict (whose bones were believed to rest at Fleury) took his revenge; for, no sooner had the peaceful partition taken place, than this unjust judge was stricken with palsy, and lost the use of his tongue. For a whole month he remained at Fleury, "beseeching the succour of our renowned Father [Benedict] with such signs as he could. At length he recovered in some small degree and returned home; yet never, for the rest of his life, could his prayers be so far heard as to enable him to pronounce with his own tongue the name of St Benedict."¹ The very same mentality is shown by that twelfth-century canon who wrote the *Miracles of Abbot Lifard*. Two nobles contested the possession of a certain farm:

The caution of many folk, and hired eloquence, were labouring to settle the claim; but that which had been foreseen by God's judgement neither ought nor was able to be hindered for the sake of the tricks of human cupidity or for the cunning of hirelings. In this legal quarrel the lawyers fell back and the champions were left in the arena...and now they contend not only for the farm but for life and death.

The ghost of the dead Abbot Lifard came and paralysed one of the combatants, who had withheld tithes due to him, and the judgement of God was thus declared.²

An interesting case comes from the great abbey of St-Père at Chartres about the time of our Norman Conquest. A neighbouring landowner, Payen by name, contested a donation made not long before by the widow Ermengarde, who on her deathbed

¹ Mabillon, *AA.SS.O.S.B.* Saec. II (1669), p. 381; E. de Certain, *Miracles de St-Benoît*.

² Mabillon, *L.c.* Saec. I (1668), p. 164.

had ceded her land for the privilege of interment beside her husband in the cloister of St-Père.

While the advocates [of the two contending parties] were discussing in due form of plea, on either side, the reasons of this case, then leapt forth a certain servant of our abbey, Laurence by name, and spake for us, crying aloud that he was a witness of this donation, and that Payen had been present when the said Ermengarde confirmed it and had offered no sort of contradiction. When Payen denied this, this said servant of St-Père, at our advice, named a day and place for battle; and though Payen consented, yet he took care not to appear against him.¹ Thus that claim was settled.

There are many other cases of judicial duel in these early monastic records; and the monks had better opportunities than most people of procuring witnesses.

Again, the great abbeys of Marmoutier and Vendôme disputed the tithes of Fontaine, apparently about A.D. 1100. Marmoutier seized them by force; Vendôme protested; and trial by battle was arranged.

The two champions appeared, to take their oath between the hands of the barons and the viscount. . . . But the Benedictines of Vendôme pointed out that their champion was noble, and could fight only with his sword, whereas that of Marmoutier was a serf or a hireling, who, by law, could fight only with a cudgel. They wished therefore that he should be rejected, and the monks of Marmoutier non-suited for having presented such a champion. They retired without any decision; and meanwhile the monks of Vendôme, believing in the justice of their case, were complaisant enough to allow Marmoutier to present a fresh champion of the requisite quality. The two champions prepared themselves for the duel by taking the sacraments. The Vendôme champion made his devotions in the abbey church, and his Marmoutier rival in St Martin's. When each had thus passed the night in prayer, they went together to visit the church of St George, who was looked upon in those days as a good knight, and to whom the duellists had recourse for victory. But, having asked each other whether they had any knowledge of the property disputed between these abbeys, they acknowledged that they could not possibly have any. "What madness" (they then said to each other) "to fight for a matter which is no concern of ours! We are not enemies; yet we risk losing our dearest possession, our life; while the monks, safe

¹ *Cart. St-Père*, p. 314: *contra quem Paganus suam presentiam minimè exhibuit*. Other cases of judicial duel are summarized by the editor on pp. cv ff.

within their cloisters, will laugh at our simplicity and will feel no interest in the defeat of the conquered champion except in so far as it makes them lose that which they desire." Thus the two champions spoke together when men came to seek them with due ceremony and to lead them to the abbey church for their oath in presence of the relics, according to duellists' custom. This, however, they now refused, saying that they would go no further for fear of swearing to falsehood, and incurring the punishment of God, of St Martin, and of the good knight St George. The disconcerted monks, in default of champions to defend their rights, agreed to an amicable compromise; and those of Vendôme, for the sake of maintaining charity, consented that Marmoutier should have a portion of the Fontaine tithes.¹

Here, again, is an English case of [1218]. Ralf Gubiun, prior of Tynemouth,

was much vexed concerning certain exactions whereby he was troubled at the hands of Simon of Tynemouth, who claimed that two monks' corrodies had been granted in perpetuity by an abbot of this monastery to that church [of Tynemouth]. Ralph brought with him a certain great champion whose name was William Pygun; for it was decided in court that this question should be decided by combat. Thus indeed it was done, and our great champion was beaten, and our adversary Simon gained his case. Wherefore the prior, in great confusion, would never return to his priory, but resigned of his own free will and came to beg pardon in the chapter-house [of the parent abbey of St Albans].²

With these we may compare a Scottish case of 1216, consequent upon Innocent III's prohibitory decree at the Lateran Council of 1215. This pope addressed a bull "to the province of York and the Kingdom of Scotland". This proceeds:

It hath come to our ears that a certain pestilent use, which should rather be called abuse, as being utterly contrary to law and honesty, hath long held within the realms of England and Scotland and is still abusively practised there, to wit that, if any bishop, abbot, or

¹ *Vendôme*, III, 237. For other cases of monasteries and judicial duel see *Olim*, I, 35 (nuns), 129; II, 145; Henry, p. 205; Wyard, p. 417; *Aurillac*, I, 264; Fletcher, p. 133; Affarosi, I, 141; Dugdale-Caley, III, 306; Pasquier, p. 15; and Dom D'Achery's notes to Guibert of Nogent (*P.L.* CLVI, col. 1196). D'Achery prints a pair of long and interesting cases from the abbey of St-Germain at Paris, as "one example out of many...to prove that, in France, the custom of judicial duel lasted a very long time": but he unfortunately neglects to give exact dates.

² *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. I, 272.

cleric chance to be impleaded by any man for any offences for which it hath been customary for layfolk to try the ordeal of battle, then the complainant is compelled, however religious his state may be, to fight personally in single combat for this cause. We therefore, by the authority of this present letter, do strictly prohibit, under pain of excommunication, that any man henceforth presume to make any such attempt, which we utterly detest as inimical to God and to Canon Law. If any man presume to make any such attempt, let him know that he incurreth the indignation of Almighty God and of saints Peter and Paul His apostles.¹

Moreover, we find monasteries not only taking advantage of the judicial combat, but even waging what might almost be called civil war on a small scale. We have seen examples already; quite apart from those cases where political quarrels made it difficult for the monks to preserve neutrality,² Continental records sometimes show appeals to the sword or the bludgeon between abbey and abbey, as between Cluny and one of its greatest daughter-abbeyes, La Charité-sur-Loire, in 1210. Again, in 1263, "the [Augustinian] canons of Lautenbach violently destroyed a castle that was in their neighbourhood".³

The origins of this kind of quarrel may often be found in the legal records, which, however, nearly always disappoint us by their silence as to the judges' decisions. Here is one case which shows the ease with which litigation slid into violence: it is from the *Calendar of Papal Letters* under the year 1321. The pope commissions the Archbishop of Canterbury

to ascertain the truth of the question between the priory of Lewes and that of St Mary's, Pritelwelle. Edmund de Wodestoke knight, the king's brother, has stated that James de Cusantia, monk of Lewes, by authority of John de Monte Martini, prior of the same, turned out William de Avernas, prior of St Mary's, Pritelwelle, and took his place. William thereupon appealed to the archbishop, and the prior of Dunmowe, to whom the cause was committed, replaced William; James then appealed to the archbishop, and pending the appeal ejected William and the convent of the said priory. Master John de Bricton and Robert de Norton, judges of the archbishop's court, replaced William and the convent; upon which James again appealed, first to the archbishop, and then to the pope. Pending this appeal

¹ *Reg. Glasguense*, I, 1843, 94.

² *E.g.* San Prospero at Reggio twice (Affarosi, I, 145, 233).

³ *Ann. Colmar*, p. 24.

William de Columbers and Richard Kentyng, monks of Lewes, by order of the prior, came with an armed force to Pritelwelle and wounded William in the head while he was celebrating Mass at the high altar, and dragged him and three of his monks, also wounded, out of the church, carrying off a box (*pixidem*) and the common seal, and putting the said prior and monks, bound hand and foot, into a cart, imprisoned them at Lewes. If this statement be true the said prior and monks are to be restored to their priory of Pritelwelle.

The causes of this fight are plain enough here; but let us take another in which, at first sight, the quarrel might seem to be merely one of jealous dignity between two bodies of rival Religious. Hadenham, the monk of Rochester cathedral, under the year 1291, records how

a few days after the burial of that bishop [Inglethorpe], the brethren [of our priory] went out in solemn procession to Frendesbury to pray for rain. The wind was contrary, so that the eddies of dust beat into their eyes and they could scarce see their processional-books. When they had celebrated their Mass, the prior begged the master of Strode hospital for permission that he and his brethren might pass through the hospital orchard. . . . But two of the brethren of that hospital, hearing this, were moved with indignation; and, thinking that this prejudiced their house, they hastened with a rout of ribalds to the postern whereby the monks must go out, and attempted to hinder their passage. Thus, when the monks came to the postern, there was no room for them to pass. So one of them addressed the master: "Hast thou not granted us leave to pass through?" "I have," said he; "and again I grant it." Then one of the monks, breaking down the postern door, seized a brother [of the hospital] named John of Esche, and cast him upon a dunghill; and others, carrying the poles of their processional banners, drave off those who lay in wait at the postern. Others, again, seizing staves from the hands of the ribalds, absolved a certain married clerk from guilt, though not from pain; they denied him a plenary indulgence, and the archbishop's absolution followed.¹ After which deeds the monks went on their way, singing the litany *Lord Christ, have mercy upon us!* This they followed forthwith with the greater litany: *Out, out, out!* And so our procession in that part has ceased unto the present day.²

¹ Plenary papal indulgences were called not only in common parlance, but even officially, "pardons from guilt and from pain", although it was admitted by all theologians that the indulgence in itself was powerless to remit the guilt. For a similar satirical use of the term by clerics, see my *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 541 and *Lanercost Chronicle*, p. 350.

² Wharton, i, 354, reading *hujusmodi* for *hujus*.

The monk's joy of battle here can be fully understood only in the light of certain formal records. About 1190, Bishop Glanville had increased the hospital revenues by adding an endowment which the monks regarded as subtracted from the possessions of his see, and therefore, more or less directly, from their convent. He had tried to soften the blow by an arrangement designed to interest his brethren in the appointment of the Spitalmaster; but this well-meant clause had only increased the friction; and thus, in the words of the county historian, he created "a perpetual jealousy" between the two communities.¹

Most usually, however, we hear of this kind of thing only in conflict with secular adversaries, and through fragmentary law reports which make it difficult or impossible to apportion the true responsibility. Here, for instance, is a case from the French royal records and concerning a royal abbey, founded in 1228 by St Louis for the Cistercians. The document is dated 1261.

The monks of Royaumont complained of the lord Guillaume de Vernon that his men of Govey, on Easter day, came to the gates of the grange of Lys and invaded the grange and the brethren with swords, and smote certain brethren and laybrethren of the said abbey. *Item*, that a certain shepherd of the monks was grievously wounded. *Item*, that the said men took the monks' sheep without present forfeit, and lost certain of them, which they [the monks] beg to have returned to them, and to have the said men punished for the aforesaid deeds. On the other hand, the said William complained that the monks' shepherds came on Easter day and fed their sheep in his meadows, by force and violence; and that his servant, the hayward, would have driven the sheep into his pound; but the shepherds withstood him with swords and staves and wounded him so sorely that, as he believes, he will die. Moreover, the said Guillaume pleaded that the abbey sheep were impounded without keepers, after this fray; wherefore he besought that amends should be made. The Council adjudged that the loss of grass suffered by William, in that the Royaumont sheep were found in his meadows at Govinz (*sic*), should be made good to the said William according to use and custom of the country; the abbot has proved nothing which would compel William to make amends; but, if he will complain against William's men, let the said William do him justice.

¹ Hasted's *Kent*, I, 554; Dugdale-Caley, VI, 665.

Again (1263),

The prior of La Charité-sur-Loire complained that the parishioners of Choegne, many of whom are tenants of the chapter of Nevers, rushed with one accord and with set purpose upon a certain monk of La Charité, who is dean and parson of the church of La Charité, because he was carrying off the prey [*predam*] of the said parish which he had taken in his own wood belonging to La Charité, called *Britannia*, the justice of which wood pertaineth to the said church of La Charité, as he asserts; for he had found the said prey feeding in the said wood. And the said monk claims that he had taken them justly, seeing that the said men, that year, had not paid the *vinage*, or customary rent due for the said pasturage. And they rescued the said prey which he was carrying off, and took him and beat him even to bruises and blood, and took his horse and led him on foot for almost two leagues, through muddy ways, to prison in the town of Marche whereof the count of Nevers is lord. Here they gave him into the custody of the provost or of his substitute; and the said provost kept him one day in captivity at the instance of the said parishioners. The injury is proved, and the fact that these men took the dean's horse and led him to the town as a prisoner and beat him; let the men amend this injustice to the prior of the monastery of La Charité.¹

Such feuds, especially between a monastery and its town, often became almost chronic. From 1262 to 1353 there was a series of quarrels between the citizens of York and the abbey of St Mary; men were killed on one at least of these occasions.²

The immediate occasion for a long and desperate quarrel might be of the pettiest: "At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the prior of St-Lô-de-Rouen and the abbot of Mortemer were in litigation concerning the value of 100 pears per annum, which the abbot demanded from the priory."³ Again, St-Martin at Autun abandoned to the abbey of Fontenay, not far distant, the possession of a certain estate under condition of certain yearly dues. "These dues gave rise to lawsuits which lasted down to the fifteenth century, and were ended only at the Court of Rome. A secret animosity, the motives of which are unknown to us, excited these two abbeys against each other (A.D. 1169-1432)."⁴ In 1280 Nicholas III gave St-Martin-d'Autun a bull

¹ *Olim*, I, 139, 183; cf. p. 369.

³ Delisle, p. 501.

² Dugdale-Caley, III, 538.

⁴ Bulliot, p. 215.

of protection against the encroachments of secular justice; it ended: "We forbid all men, by these presents, to occupy, take as pledge, invade, or hold by any title whatsoever the possessions of this abbey. If any be so audacious, let him know that he incurs the indignation of God Almighty and of the blessed Apostles St Peter and St Paul." The historian of the abbey adds: "This prohibition had no great effect. Until the beginning of the fifteenth century, hostilities broke out unceasingly between the duke and the Bishop of Autun or the abbey: here are a few examples...." And when he comes to 1326 he adds: "Quarrels with secular jurisdictions, quarrels for prerogative with the bishops of Autun, quarrels with the serfs who loudly demanded emancipation, quarrels with the monks who unceasingly exacted the augmentation of their allowances, such was the heritage which was received by Abbot Jean de Marigny, and which was faithfully transmitted to his successors for the next half-century."¹ Therefore we have no great reason for surprise when we find a Portuguese bishop of 1185 specifying the particular horses which he left by will to particular friends, and describing one as "the horse concerning which I had a dispute with the Abbot of Tarauca"—*super quo habuit controversiam cum abbate de Tarauca*.² The bishop had perhaps the same feeling which inspired a Norfolk farmer of fifty years ago; he had a favourite which he commonly referred to as "the 'oss that killed the lawyer".

But the main interest of all these cases, in the present context, is financial; they explain the enormous leakage which went on, either in the law courts or through less regular channels. That drain will be best understood in the light of a short chronological series from among the most striking figures: a whole volume could easily be filled with instances, great and small. At Malmesbury, under William de Colerne (1262-76), his "expenses in lawsuits and divers other matters" of like kind, such as journeys to defend the abbey claims, money given for the legate's favour, etc., come to £25 11. 1s. 11d.³ We may compare this with other outlays. He bought the appropriation of two churches, added considerably to the abbey's landed possessions,

¹ Bulliot, pp. 269, 274; cf. pp. 276 ff.

² *Bulletin Du Cange*, 1927, p. 90.

³ *Reg. Malmesb.* R.S. II, 360.

and built on some of the new lands; all this totalled at £753. 13s. 4d. He bought Church ornaments to the amount of £47. 13s. 4d. He built a conduit bringing pure water to the abbey, £100. During his eighteen years of rule, he bought corn to the total value of £4727. 8s. 1½d. In [1256] the prior of Winchester had run into debt with the usurers to the amount of nearly £5000 by reason of a lawsuit between the monks and the bishop-elect.¹ The litigation as to the election of Robert Orford to Ely, in 1302, ran the see into more than £15,000 of debt [£600,000].² The St Albans chronicler gives three causes for the heavy debts of the abbey in 1335; first, the frequent vacancies of the abbacy, each of which meant great payments to king and pope; secondly, the debts contracted by the previous abbot; and, thirdly, the expenses of lawsuits against the abbey serfs.³ At Rocester abbey,

the prosperous days of the canons had ended even before the Black Death. In 1318 they alleged that the cattle plague and bad harvests had reduced them to such poverty that they had been obliged to go out and beg quasi mendicantes. But on Bishop Norbury's personal visitation of Rocester Priory he found that heavy debts had been incurred through the attempt to obtain possession of the appropriation of Woodford in Northamptonshire,⁴

i.e. through legal expenses and (probably) needful bribery. About the same time, St Augustine's at Canterbury was giving Master Peter de Denne a salary of £10 a year (probably with free lodging and commons) for his legal help against the archbishop with his monks, and the archdeacon. The Bishop of Winchester, adds Thorne, contributed £5100 to help St Augustine's in its suit against the common enemy, the primate.⁵ A little later (1329) St Augustine's spent £1210 in its lawsuit against the archbishop; and the chronicler tells us that the quarrel led to a bloody conflict also.⁶ The rival records of Canterbury cathedral priory tell us how, in this lengthy lawsuit which mainly concerned the archbishop's claim of right to "visit" St Augustine's, judgement was finally given against him in 1332, with the enormous sum of £700 in costs. He was given the alternative

¹ Wharton, I, 310.

³ *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. II, 294.

⁶ Twysden, 1979, 2004.

² Wharton, I, 641; cf. p. 639.

⁴ Hibbert, *Diss.* p. 109.

⁶ *Ibid.* 2044-2051 (c. xxxv, § 2).

of paying within sixty days, or excommunication.¹ In 1460 the abbey of St-Trond borrowed 3000 gold florins for the expenses of sending a representative to the court of Rome "to expedite certain arduous business of ours at that court".² In [1465], after St-Vincent-de-Laon had suffered very heavily from wars and pestilence, a single lawsuit against the cathedral chapter cost the abbey 1735 *livres*.³

I cannot end this section better than by a citation from Dr Rose Graham, from whose admirable monograph on St Gilbert of Sempringham I quoted in the preceding chapter. We saw there how carefully the early Fathers of two great Orders took their precautions against quarrels between the brethren. These monks of Sempringham were as definitely a reformed body as the Cistercians; and, in both cases, merit attracted money, which again tempted to relaxation within and to conflict without. "Material wealth involved a loss of spiritual efficiency. . . . The career of an officer of a rich house attracted men with business capacities but with little enthusiasm for the old ascetic ideal." This began even before 1200; and, by 1309, we find the prior of Malton accused by John de Bordesden (to whom he in turn attributed similar offences) of almost homicidal violence. Upon which Dr Graham comments:

The frequent occurrence of broils between the Religious [of Sempringham] and their neighbours shows up the dark side of medieval life, the utter brutality of its deeds of violence. In the wars of the cities of Ancient Greece it was considered a shameful deed to cut down olive trees, because they would take so long to grow again. No such scruples existed in England in the Middle Ages. In 1337 fifty men broke into the Priory of St Margaret at Marlborough, burnt the trees and timber there. In 1316 the Priory of St Catherine's, Lincoln, lost "by hunger the greater part of five hundred sheep which were driven out of the close". In 1330 certain knights broke the banks of the fishery at Haverholme, so that the water which flowed to the priory mills ran out through the breaches and flooded three hundred acres of meadow.

Other instances besides the attack of the Prior of Malton on John de Bordesden showed that the Religious avenged their wrongs in an unseemly way. They would not wait for the King's justice, but rode

¹ *Lit. Cant.* 1, 511 ff.

² *Cart. St-Trond*, p. 336. Compare pp. 349 and 440 for the heavy legal dues paid by the abbey to Rome.

³ Wyard, p. 511.

out with armed men to recover their cattle and inflict some damage on the enemy. Yet in 1303 Robert Mannyng wrote, as he sat in the cloister at Sempringham, that the fighting monk was guilty of the sin of sacrilege.

“Also religyous are to wyte
That for maystry wyl gladly smyte;
They oghe to be suffrable and meke
And no foly on outhur men seke,
Hys tunge shulde be hys fauchoun,
Hys strokes shulde be hys orysun;
If any be yn foly stoute,
Holde yn cloystre and com nat out.”

Nine years afterwards John, Prior of Sempringham, rode off with his canons and servants to recover the goods which Roger de Birthorpe and Geoffrey Luterel of Irnham had seized when they broke the doors and walls of Sempringham.¹

¹ *St Gilbert, etc.* pp. 130ff., 138ff.

CHAPTER XXXII

DWINDLING NUMBERS

SUCH being the main channels of waste, how did the monks commonly meet them?

"Excrustation" of shrines and crosses and retables was always an obvious resource; or, as a measure less desperate on the surface, though perhaps all the more dangerous on that account, the pawning of silver from the refectory or ornaments from the church. The great Suger of St-Denis [1140] was solicitous for the endowment of his dependent priory at St-Lucien, and spent 20 *livres* on the planting of vineyards: "a wise precaution", he tells us, "against the lack of wine; for oftentimes crosses and chalices and copes were put to pawn in many places, and even at Lagny" (another dependent priory with larger resources).¹ This frequently resulted in the scandal that Jews had the vessels of God in their houses; a matter which occupied the attention of popes and councils.²

The next resource was to raise ready money by selling "corrodies", or annuities. Bishops and visitors, as we have seen, objected to this not only because the annuitant thus became a hanger-on, or even a lodger, within the precincts, and would thus introduce an element unmonastic at the best, and at the worst very contrary to the claustral spirit. They objected also, and with very good reason, to the system as financially unsound, and tempting the monks to incur long and serious liabilities for the sake of a lump sum at the moment. But, as we have seen, even in mid-fifteenth century, after 200 years of legatine and episcopal decrees, corrodies were enormously frequent; and, though Dr Hunt was doubtless right in claiming that some of them were good business bargains, the evidence is overwhelming against this as a general rule. It may be conjectured with some probability that the average losses of those monasteries which dealt in corrodies was no smaller than that of the average modern

¹ *Opera* (Soc. Hist. France), p. 158.

² Instances from [800] to 1454 in S. Grayzel, *Church and Jews in the Thirteenth Century*, pp. 34-5.

dabbler in stocks or speculator on the turf and the football-field.

We have seen, too, how Whethamstede of St Albans earned special praise by avoiding corrodies *and the cutting-down of woods*. That points to another very frequent visitatorial injunction, or lament of the abbey chronicler. Each abbot, and each generation of monks, might be subjected, if fortune were unfavourable, to the eternal temptations of the unthrifty landowner; to cutting down or sale of woods, and to leases granted at low rent in consideration of a heavy fine in ready money.

Most desperate of all financial shifts, of course, was the loan at usury, whether from Jews or Lombards or the still more hard-hearted (if we may believe Matthew Paris) money-lenders of southern France, among whom the merchants of Cahors were the most notorious. While Church law and papal decrees discouraged this, papal practice encouraged it. One of the best of all our prelates, Archbishop Pecham, lurked for a while in his own diocese under fear of excommunication for not having paid those moneys which, as a Franciscan, he might not legally possess. His appointment to the see of Canterbury had cost him nearly £3000 [£120,000] at the Roman court; this he could only raise by borrowing at usury from the Italian bankers; and even the revenues of Canterbury were quite insufficient to meet this debt when he came to work in his own diocese.¹ He wrote to the pope:

Unless, within a month of Michaelmas now impending, I can effectually satisfy the merchants of Lucca, with whom I contracted at the Roman Court for the payment of 4000 marks sterling, I shall forthwith find myself under sentence of excommunication, and shall be denounced as excommunicate in my own and in other cathedral churches, with ringing of bells and lighted candles, on every Sunday and holy-day.

Therefore if the pope will not intervene in his favour:

I see no other final refuge before me than this; to desert the office committed unto me, to dismiss my household or my flock, and to go forth in exile to some far-distant land, where I can lurk as a solitary in some monastery and suffer this sentence of anathema in all humility, until God may grant me to satisfy these merchants little

¹ *Epistolae*, R.S. I, lxviii, 18.

by little from the revenues of my see, receiving or raising them as I can. Otherwise I must needs borrow money from them, and, by occasion of such borrowing, fawn upon them and bear with them in their filthy talk; with those very men against whom, by your special mandate, it had been my duty to proceed sternly. . . . Never would I have received the grace of consecration, if I had believed that, for so small a cause, so horrible a blot of malediction would have been laid upon me.

We have no clear evidence as to what happened in the latter stages of this case; but the reader will need no further reminder of what was likely to happen when once a monastery fell into the usurers' hands.

In these circumstances, the monasteries instinctively fell back upon the only absolutely effectual resource of a capitalist foundation; the restriction of numbers. I say advisedly, *of a capitalist foundation*; for, to the piously communistic Religious of St Benedict's time, numerical restriction would have been either irrelevant or positively disadvantageous. Monks who, working like peasants and living like peasants, were endowed with at least ten times more land per head than a peasant—in many cases, perhaps, fifty times more—would have gained financially by the multiplication of numbers. The enlistment of fresh unsalaried workers (up to a certain point) would have effected an economy of wages which would have more than counterbalanced the simple food, dress and lodging of these additional labourers. But, under a system like that of our modern colleges, where the fellows do not earn directly but are supported from the revenues of the foundation, the shrinkage of dividends can always be successfully met, within very wide limits, by the diminution of recipients. There can be no doubt, I think, that this is by far the most potent cause for that steady decline in monastic numbers which comes out so glaringly from all our documents. The Black Death, so often represented as almost the sole cause, did naturally make a sudden change here, as in every department of life. But economic students are showing more and more clearly that, when once the shock had passed, the permanent change was surprisingly small; and this elasticity of human nature is shown perhaps more clearly in the field of monastic population than elsewhere. Not only had depopulation been

going on steadily for generations before the plague, but the post-plague shrinkage seems to have been slightly less than that of the pre-plague years.

Moreover, the disciplinarian constantly alleges an economic reason for this lamentable shrinkage, and the monk himself confesses it. We have already seen, in Chapter XXII, how the wealthy abbey of Münster deliberately set itself to balance its budget in 1312 by limiting the congregation to sixteen persons; and visitors recognized this causation as clearly as the monks did. So, again, at St-Trond in 1249, where one of the pillars of reform for this bankrupt abbey was to reduce the number of monks to thirty.¹

Bishop Walpole of Ely (1299-1303) recorded in his register a list of articles of enquiry for the visitation of monasteries.² Four of these run: "*Item*, What is the ordinary amount of the income or revenues of the monastery? *Item*, how many monks could live therefrom if they be well and lawfully administered? *Item*, how many monks are there in the monastery? *Item*, is the customary number of monks there?" At his own cathedral monastery he found that these questions could not be satisfactorily answered; and this discovery drew from him the most reasoned and detailed injunctions on the subject that I know of. He wrote in his *Register*:

Moreover, since the worship of God is the more increased, the more numerous are the fit and devout ministers who are laudably lodged in the Lord's house, it cannot be doubted that Religious are in grievous delinquency when they attempt to impede the augmentation of the brethren, especially up to the statutory number, by evil machinations and odious objections. We therefore, willing that the statutes of the holy fathers Our predecessors be observed, and that the ancient number of monks, to wit seventy, be filled up, do ordain, and do strictly enjoin and command in virtue of obedience, that as often so ever and whensoever any scholar or clerk, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, shall come unto your monastery and beg humbly to be made a monk, provided that he be a fair Latinist³ and otherwise suitable according to the Rule, that ye, without waste of time, shall receive him in kindly fashion, charitably granting him your house and fraternity in the Lord, from whatsoever part of England

¹ *Cart. St-Trond*, I, 254.

² Brit. Museum, Add. MS. 9822, f. 55 b.

³ Probabiliter literatus.

he may have sprung,¹ doing thus, and in so far as in you lieth procuring that it be done, in so far as the revenues of the monastery can suffice. And, considering how hard it is for him who striveth for monastic life as we have described to undergo examination from each and all, and to be ignominiously repelled on the objection or disapprobation of any single monk, sometimes perchance malicious, therefore We will that three or four prudent and discreet men be chosen from the convent who, with the prior, even as may seem expedient, shall diligently examine the candidates in stead of all the monks, and shall present to the Chapter, for all men's approval, those whom they, or the greater part of them, find suitable; and all [the rest] shall accept these, unless perchance some cause, judged reasonable and legitimate by the whole Chapter or at least by the greater and senior portion thereof, shall evidently oppose that which had first been expounded by the said examiners, or perchance shall have been imperfectly understood by them. And, lest it be possible that this difficulty as to the reception [of fresh brethren] should be imputed rather to the ambition of the rulers and obedientiaries in the monastery than to their zeal for Religion—to wit, that the revenues and rents assigned to certain offices for a greater number of monks should be turned not to the profit of the monastery (for we see no signs of this) nor to the profit of the brethren now in the house (for their portion is in no way increased) but that they are wholly turned to the profit of the said rulers or officials—therefore We will and ordain that the prior, subprior, and other greater folk of the convent shall effectually set themselves, with all diligence that they conveniently can, for the honour of God and of holy Religion, to the filling up of the said number in the aforesaid form, putting behind their backs and rejecting all frivolous allegations and malicious objections of those who wickedly oppose it. Let the rest of the convent, under pain of greater excommunication, presume in no way to impede or maliciously postpone it, provided that the other points which the Rule commandeth as to those who are to be received, and have newly been received, be diligently observed in this matter.²

¹ Feuds between Northerners and Southerners, even to the blood, were common in mediæval Oxford, and are provided for sometimes in college statutes. I hope to print soon, in *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, evidence against the delusion that nationalism is a post-Reformation growth. Meanwhile I am glad to see Professor A. F. Pollard in arms against the delusion (*The Listener*, Nov. 7, 1934).

² *Reg. Walpole* (Ely), f. 52 a. There is no trace, I believe, of improvement following upon this outspoken mandate. For the extent to which finances were momentarily restored by the suppression and absorption of dependent priories, and the financial confusion which finally resulted from this, see Ch. de Lasteyrie in "Éc. des Chartes", *Positions des thèses*, 1899, pp. 58-9.

Cardinal Hugh of St-Cher, Walpole's contemporary, speaks of this as a serious and widespread scandal: "For it is most indecent that a monastery which was wont to have a numerous and luxuriant community—*numerosum et nemorosum conventum*—should be brought to fewness of brethren; and this is what is done every day by reason of debts and dissipation of goods."¹ It was so common, in fact, that even official visitors sometimes bent before the storm, and approved what they were professionally bound to condemn. Mauriac, a cell to St-Pierre-le-Vif at Sens, had been well endowed; but in 1219 the visitor decreed that, in view of money difficulties, no new brethren should be accepted until the numbers had fallen to twelve, and that there should never again be more than fifteen.²

St-Cher points out that this kind of thing naturally results in a chilling of charity on the part of great benefactors or their descendants. His younger contemporary, the chronicler of Croxden abbey, ordinarily dry and succinct, lets himself go on the subject of monastic numbers and patronal control.

In this year 1319 Satan uprose against Israel, and incited David to number Israel, as it is written in the 21st chapter of *Chronicles*. For lord Thomas de Fournival, the new lord of Alveton, in virtue of his lordship [as heir to our Founder] numbered the monks of Croxden. And, because he found but thirty of us, he said that he might lawfully smite this city, for that it had not [its original number of] fifty. Moreover he put many other exactions upon the monks, to wit, that a certain distribution of alms should be made daily at the gate, and the entertainment of his horses and hunting-hounds at will, and the reception of his seven bailiffs of Alveton to eat in a special room every Friday throughout the year.³

Two generations later, we have a very illuminating document, from the layman's point of view, recorded in the Papal Registers. It runs:

To the Archbishop of York. Mandate, if he find the circumstances to be as stated, to grant licence and otherwise proceed as below. A statement was made to Urban VI on behalf of Thomas, Earl of Nottingham, that the number of the monks in the Benedictine priory

¹ *Opera*, iv, 286 (commenting on Lamentations, i, 1). For further evidence that the monks' own comfort was the main motive of these reductions, see *Revue Mabillon*, xxi (1931), 34.

² Bouvier, p. 126.

³ *Coll. Top. et Geneal.* II, 1835, 304.

of St Benedict at Kyrkeby, in the diocese of Lichfield, founded and endowed by his progenitors for seven monks, and subjected by them to the monastery of St Nicholas, Angers, had long been not kept up, and that at the will of a certain knight two monks only resided; that the Rule was not observed; that the goods were not expended for pious uses and the priory's rights neglected; that on account of the dissolute life of the prior and French monks living there, and of their servants who were at discord with the English, and on account of the wars between the two realms, the buildings were partially falling; and that the earl desired the priory to be turned to better uses. Urban VI ordered the Bishop of Lichfield to transfer the priory to the Carthusians, and to convert it into a house of that order, due provision being made to the prior and monks, if any. Upon the earl's recent petition, containing that no step has been taken towards the execution of the said mandate, the pope orders the archbishop to grant him licence, upon King Richard's licence being obtained, to found, on his domain in the island of Morholm (*sic*), in the diocese of Lincoln, a Carthusian house in honour of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, St John the Evangelist, St Edward the Confessor, and all other saints; the archbishop is further ordered to transfer to it the said priory, which is to be separated from St Nicholas's, and whose name is to be extinguished, and to appropriate to it the churches of Belton and Epeworth, situate in the said island and of the earl's patronage. In the Carthusian house thus founded there are to be a prior and twelve monks.¹

Here we have a blunt soldier's way of dealing with a scandal which had long baffled the hierarchy. Archbishop Odo Rigaldi's *Register* shows clearly how serious the fall of numbers was becoming, in mid-thirteenth century, throughout one of the most civilized provinces of Europe. Honorius III's decree against the canons of Autun who, "gaping after their own comfort", had reduced their numbers, was already incorporated in Canon Law (*Decret. Greg.* lib. i, tit. ii, c. 12). The legate Othobon published a more emphatic prohibition for England in 1268: "No greed or sloth or contempt ought so to prevail that the fewness of worshippers attenuates the worship of the King of Kings... Therefore we decree, and strictly command, that the ancient number of monks be maintained in every monastery, and more especially in those which are cathedral churches."²

¹ *C.P.L.* iv, 537 (1396).

² *Lyndwood*, II, 151. John of Ayton comments on the word *sloth*, "that is, *acedia*, which is wont somewhat frequently to reign among churchmen and Religious".

In 1336, again, this was one of the questions of capital importance dealt with in the reforming statutes of Benedict XII. Chapter xvi is headed: "That the ancient number of monks [or of *canons*, in his statutes for the Augustinians] be maintained."¹ The Benedictine General Chapter of 1363 directed that visitors should always enquire "whether the ancient and due number of monks be maintained, as Benedict XII...and Othobon require".²

Let me here give such a catena of instances as will throw clear light upon this downward trend, and will enable the reader to form a rough judgement on the extent to which it was affected by the Black Death. Further statistics will be found in my Appendix.

The greatest monastery in Europe, during the last four or five medieval centuries, was Cluny. A list drawn up for the General Chapter (shortly after 1405 to all appearance) enables us to take a fairly wide survey of its principal dependent monasteries in France, Italy, England and Spain. The houses in which an earlier population is compared with that of [1410] amount to 25. Their aggregate population at this latter date was 704; in earlier times, 965 (or much greater if we accept the possible figure of 400 for Cluny at its best). Thus there is a decline of about 25 per cent. at least—it may in fact have been a good deal greater than these figures show; for the second column seems to represent (if we look closely at the guarded language of the record) rather the nominal number at each priory than the numbers actually present at a [1410] visitation. Thus the figure 25, for instance, may mean no more than "we try to keep ourselves up to 25". In 8 cases we have the actual dates of these earlier and higher numbers. Gigny was reduced in 1266 from 32 to 25; Sales in 1344 from [?] to 30; Pomerii in Forez, 12 in 1299 but now 8; St-Maieul 50 originally, fallen to 40 in 1337; Canturio fallen from 80 to 40 in 1316; at Cannobio the nuns reduced to 10 by decree of 1367; in the same year the monks of Signa were reduced from [?] to 4, and Castelletto from 8 to 7. Cluny, the parent monastery, had in [1130] more than 300; just

¹ Printed e.g. in H. E. Salter, *Chapters of the Augustinian Canons* (Cant. and York Soc. 1922), p. 244; cf. p. 203, where we see how visitors were instructed to take their stand upon this pronouncement and upon Othobon's.

²Pantin, II, 87.

before the Black Death, 260; at the end of the century, 200. In only two cases do we find a slight rise in numbers (apart from two or three others in which one or two fresh monks had been specially provided for in a fresh endowment, by some benefactor who regretted the depopulation). At Thiers there were originally only 15; in 1314 these had increased to 21. At St-Orient near Auch there are now [in 1410] 25; "according to the ancient visitations, the statutory number was not so high".

From this Cluniac Order, where we might expect a little more regularity than the average, we may pass on to other conspicuous cases. Fontevraud is complicated by the fact that it was not only a double house (brethren and nuns) but also head of an Order. We find 3000 nuns in [1115], and, on Suger's authority, more than 4000 in [1130]. In 1248 there were only 700, including the (less numerous) brethren. In 1297, the nuns were reduced to 300 from 360 of a little earlier. On the other hand, they claimed 500 nuns in 1360, in a plea for diminution of papal taxes. In 1507 there were 82 nuns, 10 novices, and a few brethren. In 1623 there were houses in this Order which had sunk to one or two inmates. Whatever discount we may allow for medieval exaggeration, we cannot escape the significance of these figures.¹ But we are on much firmer ground when we come to the Norman monasteries. Bec, famous as the home of Lanfranc and Anselm, gives clear evidence of depopulation for retrenchment's sake. Archbishop Odo Rigaldi found 93 monks there in 1248; 80 in 1254; "about 80" in 1260. In 1266 he found 40 "excellently conducted" monks, whose finances were flourishing in spite of a disastrous fire: but evidently this salvation had only been found through the not uncommon expedient of quartering monks on other houses. In 1269 (his last visit) there was a population of 64: 44 priest-monks and 20 novices.² It is tantalizing that Odo, amid all his precious statistics, so seldom compares the present numbers of the houses with what they should have been. We have, however, 15 such cases; in these, our aggregate past population of 227 had fallen to 158; *i.e.* by 30.4 per cent.

In the early sixteenth century, the royal abbey of St-Denis,

¹ Hélyot, ed. Migne, II, 307, 311, 313.

² *Regestrum*, pp. 8, 197, 389, 548, 622.

with stalls in choir for the original 150 monks, had only 70 in fact. At the same time other French houses of the first rank are reported by the papal visitors as containing respectively "from 23 to 30", "40", and "20".¹ Grestain had 32 monks in 1257. It is recorded that these numbers had fallen heavily by about 1300. The next figures we have are for 1744, when there were only 3 monks, and 1757, when only one lived in the abbey, another was "in detention at Rouen", and the third "had never resided since he took the vows".² Marnans had 12 in 1298; 6 in 1477, and the numbers sank lower in later years.³ St-Vincent-de-Laon, 30 to 40 in 1098, and 20 in 1504, of whom at least 5 were priors of separate priories.⁴ Autun, in 1324, cut down its numbers to 30; in 1790 there were only 8.⁵ Saulve Réal, founded with 13 monks, in 1177, had only 9 in 1463 and 10 in 1526.⁶ Its mother-abbey of Bonnevaux sank from 31 in 1278 to 5 or 6 under the *commendam* system. The Cistercian abbey of Acey, which had probably at least 30 or 40 monks in 1250, had fallen in 1415 to 6 and had in 1450 only 11; numbers never rose again. In 1519 there were 9; about 1600, 8.⁷ Aurillac, in the early Middle Ages, had 40 monks. In 1561, Pius IV held that it would be for the increase of divine worship there if the monastery were secularized, so that the abbot and community should be replaced by 5 dignitaries and 15 prebendaries with 2 assistant priests.⁸ St-Germain at Auxerre, which had 50 monks in [1230] and 36 in [1550], was reduced to less than 19 under Pierre de Lyon (1593—).⁹ The Cistercians of la Grâce-Dieu, in the fifteenth century, had fallen to 5 or 6. Their neighbours of Maisières, in 1515, numbered only from 8 to 10.¹⁰ St-Pierre-le-Vif at Sens, in 1350, had only 22 monks. In 1462, it was so poor that it could maintain only 6.¹¹

In all these French houses, we must make allowance for the Hundred Years' War, which was more deleterious than the Black Death. For Italy and part of the German Empire, we

¹ A. Vidier, *Les Abbayes de St-Denis*, etc. (Soc. de l'Hist. de Paris, 1898).

² Grestain, pp. 69, 77, 168, 172. ³ Maillet-Guy, *Paroisses*, p. 80.

⁴ Wyard, p. 211. ⁵ Bulliot, pp. 182, 350.

⁶ Chuzel, pp. 102, 138, 201. ⁷ Blanchot, pp. 138, 140, 157, 175.

⁸ Aurillac, II, 597, 600. ⁹ Henry, p. 428.

¹⁰ Richard, pp. 72, 80.

¹¹ Bouvier, p. 142. The author pleads the wars in excuse; but there had been plenty of time for considerable, if not complete, recovery.

must bear in mind the long struggles between popes and emperors, with their accompaniment of savage civil war. The rich abbey of St Prospero at Reggio is said to have had 200 monks at its height [1140], but for this there is no clear evidence. A single generation later, when mismanagement and civil war had reduced the numbers to 9, the monks asserted that their population had once been 80. In 1446, after further wars and mismanagement, they complained that their numbers were "sometimes only 3" besides the abbot.¹

The "monasterium Demisiense", in Hungary, though "opulentissimum", had sunk in 1435 to 4 inmates, including the abbot Bernard. In 1436 the numbers were the same; 1437, 5; 1438, 7; 1439 and 1440, 5. Yet this abbot Bernard died "cum sanctitatis fama" in 1440.² The Cistercians of Himmerode had 60 monks and 200 lay brethren in [1320]; in [1450] the population, all told, was 42.³

Let us turn now to England. "The number of monks in Durham was, as elsewhere, variable. In 1409 there were 27, including the Prior, at one time, and 31 at another. About the same time there were 32. In 1437, 61. In 1446 there were 49 in Durham and 30 in the cells; in 1456, 71 in Durham and cells; in 1501, 43 in Durham."⁴ In 1297, Archbishop Winchelsey found that the monks of Canterbury cathedral were 30 below the statutory number, and were unwilling to obey his injunction to fill this gap.⁵ At Ely,

The number of brethren of which the convent was to have consisted seems to have been 70, but actually it never reached that number except in early times; perhaps during the fervour of the twelfth century the house was full. Bishop Northwold (1229-54) ordered the number to be raised to 70 according to old custom. In 1345 it seems to have been 49; in 1349, before the plague, the number was 53; immediately after it had fallen to 28. By 1352-3 it was 35. Between 1258 and 1533 the number varied between 32 and about 60. In 1335 and 1336 there were 55 monks in Holy Orders and probably a few not yet ordained. Seven years before the Dissolution there were 37 monks and at the time of the surrender 24.⁶

¹ Affarosi, I, 94, 109-111, 113 ff., 227, 252, 260-1, 282; II, 24, 35-9, 108, 126, 154.

² *Chron. M.O.* pp. xxxii ff.

³ *Eisla Sacra*, I, pp. 649, 656.

⁴ *Durham Account Rolls*, Surtees Soc. III, introd. II.

⁵ *Lit. Cant. R.S.* I, 24.

⁶ Atkinson, p. 14.

Westminster, founded for 80 monks and possibly possessing a few more in 1260, had sunk in 1500 to 46; in 1528 there were 44; six years later, 43; and 1535, 41.¹ The numbers at St Albans for different dates are printed in *V.C. Herts*. They run: A.D. [1200], not more than 100; 1380, 58; 1396, 52; 1401, 54; 1451, 46; 1476, 48 or 49; 1492, 54; 1529-30, 48 (+6 at Oxford); 1539, 39. At Oseney, the abbey had 27 brethren in 1337, 27 in 1445, and about the same number in 1520. But in the thirteenth century it had had 50 canons and 24 lay-brothers. Goring had 36 nuns in 1301 and only 8 in 1445.² A good many smaller English examples will be found among my tables in the Appendix.

One abbey, however, gives an increase before the disasters of war and plague. For Caunes, in Languedoc, there survive periodical indications of numbers. Including the abbot, there were 15 in 1232; 19 in 1240; 26 in 1346; 15 or 16 in 1416; 8 in 1547; 16 in 1659; 15 about the same date; 7 in 1789 and for many years before. Somewhere about 1300, the numbers seem to have been higher than 26.³

There is, again, one apparent exception to all the aforesaid. Visitors were almost as anxious to keep the nuns' numbers down as to keep the men's up. But the contrast is only superficial: both were sides of the same principle, the *ancient* and *due* number must be *maintained*. The men were tempted to diminish unduly: the women, to an equally undue increase. The dowry-system, which no legislation could stamp out, suffered from the financial defects of the corrody system. It was an obvious relief for present impecuniosity, at the expense of adding heavily, twenty or perhaps even ten years hence, to the drain upon the house's resources. The result was that nunneries—quite apart from their smaller original endowments and their greater difficulties of management in a rough age—became more hopelessly embarrassed than the men's houses. Therefore those same visitors, in the same breath, are directed to keep the men's numbers up, and the women's down, to what they should be: let them ask "whether there are more nuns than can be sustained from the resources of the nunnery".⁴

¹ *V.C.H. London*, p. 447.

² *Oseney Cartulary*, I, xxviii.

³ *Caunes*, pp. 104, 121, 148-9, 187.

⁴ H. E. Salter, *Chapters*, 213; compare the whole ch. v of Eileen Power, *Med. Eng. Nunneries*.

This question of monastic population has been treated incidentally by other writers,¹ but very exhaustively, with his usual learning and candour, by Dom Ursmer Berlière, whose lamented death dealt a very severe blow to monastic research.² His papers, if published earlier, would have made it unnecessary for me to labour these points; but his concurrence is so valuable that I must here summarize his results, based upon details collected from the Benedictine houses of his own Low Countries, France, Germany and Italy, with a few concerning Spain and England. These instances number no less than 119 in all. The earliest figure he gives is sometimes from the Dark Ages, when numbers were highest, but in the large majority of cases they are from the twelfth or thirteenth century. Omitting a few cases too doubtful for statistical use, we find that 104 of these houses had gone down, while fifteen showed an increase, but always so inconsiderable as hardly to affect the general result. The aggregate population of the 119 monasteries was 7665 at the earlier date; this had sunk before the Reformation to 2573, a fall of more than 64 per cent. If we take the English cases by themselves, these come to only thirteen, a far narrower field than I have been able to work out; they show a fall from 885 inmates to 471, or 47 per cent. In a very valuable epilogue (vol. XLII, p. 33) Dom Berlière states his general conclusions:

A glance at this chronological and geographical summary is enough to show a gradual and general diminution from the early thirteenth century onwards, apart from a few individual exceptions here and there. The curve falls more rapidly in the fourteenth century and reaches its lowest point in the sixteenth; then it gradually rises again; and, towards the middle of the seventeenth, it reaches a stability which lasts until the violent suppression caused by the French Revolution or the forced secularization in Germany.

The causes he finds are as follows. (1) The enormous early numbers are to be explained by the comparative fewness of monasteries, and the greatness of some particular founder or ruler.³ (2) The multiplication of monasteries in the eleventh and

¹ E.g. K. Lamprecht, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, I, 845; A. Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, IV, 328; R. Génestal, *Rôle des monastères etc.* p. 161.

² *Revue bénédictine*, XL (1929), 231 ff. and XLI (1930), 31 ff.

³ I cannot help feeling that we must also allow here for hagiological exaggerations. But, as the reader will see, I have tried also to show how the statistics come out when we have heavily discounted these early hundreds.

twelfth centuries did much to equalize the local supplies. (3) Then, from [1120] onwards, came the great reforms of which the Cistercian is best known, and a century later the Mendicant Friars; vocations were thus diverted from the older monasteries. "Nothing shows more clearly the failure of a certain number of Benedictine monasteries, through religious decay or depopulation, than their transference to other Orders"; of this Berlière gives forty-two documentary instances, nearly all between 1230 and 1300. In 1236, Gregory IX commanded the Bishop of Brescia to amalgamate the numerous monasteries in his diocese which were decayed in numbers. (4) Then came the Black Death and similar epidemics; in France, the Hundred Years' War.¹ (5) The Great Schism also played its part. (6) Another cause must be found in aristocratic exclusivism which, from the thirteenth century onwards, spread in Germany, Burgundy, and central and southern France, and aimed at providing comfortably for younger sons. "The immediate consequence of this exclusivism was the reduction of monastic numbers, the introduction of private property, the ruin of the religious houses, and sometimes their secularization." (7) There were also economic causes: the development of commerce and industry, the consequent attraction of country folk into the towns; "This was one cause of the diminution and disappearance of lay-brethren, which compelled the Cistercians gradually to abandon the direct exploitation of their lands."² (8) Lastly,

the excesses of the Protestants in the sixteenth century paralyzed the movement of restoration. This movement might have been more fruitful if the *commendam* system had not resulted in an excessive distribution of the claustral population, by handing over to outsiders the greater part of the monastic revenues.

¹ Yet in Italy and some parts of the German Empire, the decay was even worse than in France. In those cases, one contributory cause must have been the perpetual civil wars which, again, found a constant excuse in the conflict between Empire and Papacy.

² Dr Previté-Orton suggests that there must have been equally strong competition from at least 1150 onwards, when the growth of the learned professions, and the multiplication of chancery-clerkships, etc., must have appealed to many quiet men who might otherwise have taken the vows. Abbot Samson is a case in point; if he could have kept himself comfortably by teaching (he confessed) he would never have come to Bury. A century later, there were far more teaching posts, and more still as time went on.

This latter sentence is incontestable; the first, however, does not seem to receive support from Dom Berlière's own figures. Attentive readers of his article will note that the falls between 1520 (before which date we cannot assume Luther's influence) and 1555 (which is the latest date of which I have taken account in this summary, and very rarely any so late as that) are not more marked than the falls between (say) 1480 and 1520. It is not that a new movement begins in 1520, but that the old decrease continues. Moreover, the ascending curve of Benedictine population scarcely ever begins until the very end of the sixteenth century, nor does it then rise again to anything approaching its medieval height.

In comment on this, I would venture to suggest that it lacks precision on one of the most important points, that of the Black Death. It is true that, for Italy, Dom Berlière writes: "Everywhere the numbers go down *in the thirteenth century*, and monasteries become extinct" (*italics mine*).¹ But it would have been equally pertinent to note this same process everywhere outside Italy. Taking the first six pages of his studies, we find six abbeys in which the recorded figures enable us to compare; in every case they show very considerable shrinkage before the plague; and, significantly, pecuniary embarrassment is often the recorded cause. St-Lambert at Liège had 44 monks in 1170; in 1197 the abbot reduced numbers from 50 to 40; in 1289, "in consequence of debt", these were cut down to 20. In 1300 "only 5 were left"; in 1342 it had 13, and 24 in 1348; in 1412, 11 and in 1588, 20. St-Trond had 40+ in [1220], 35 in [1230], cut down to 30 in 1250 in order to balance the budget; "But in reality during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the number was often less." Stavelot-Malmedy had 70 in 1147; 40+ in 1160; 22 in 1334; and 17 in 1460. At St-Hubert, in 1330, it was resolved to return to "the ancient and customary number" as soon as they could redeem certain properties which they had

¹ The instances of fall that he quotes are 15-2; 12-3; 12-0, together with cases where we do not know the earlier numbers. Here the fallen numbers are, in his earlier collection, respectively 0, 2, 5, 1, 17, 2, 9, 27, 5, 12, 12, 8; then he gives a supplementary list on p. 34 of vol. XLII which is still more striking: 6, 5, 3 (no abbot for 5 years past), 1, 1, 0, 1, 3. For Spain, he has less statistics, but notes that "the Cluniac houses there show progressive decrease from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century".

pledged. Lobbes had 78 monks in [850], 50 in 1127, 100+ in 1135; about 15 years later, "in order to pay off their debts, they were obliged to restrict admissions and to disperse the brethren." St-Denis-en-Broqueroie had 24 in 1227 and 1238, but only 13 in 1322. St-Martin at Tournai had 70 in 1105 and 69 in 1269; but "the indebtedness of the house and the negligence of a few abbots lowered this number: in 1331 it stood at 21".

Not, of course, that we must neglect the Black Death here, any more than in other departments of history, but in these numerical statistics, perhaps more than anywhere else, it is important to reduce it to its true proportions. The ordinary sensational descriptions are based upon exceptional cases, carelessly or tendenciously chosen. At Meaux in Yorkshire, 32 died out of 49 monks and lay-brethren; and this is often quoted as typical.¹ Here, again, is a case supplied to me by the late Canon Woolley of Lincoln, from the Peterborough *Consuetudinary* of 1371 in the Lambeth Library: "Because the number of monks, before the Plague, was 64, of whom, within little more than half a year, 34 departed this life, of the wisest of the whole congregation, therefore the aforesaid order [of divine service] cannot be kept in all respects" (vol. 1, f. 147). Yet, in contrast to those two cases, at the great cathedral priory of Canterbury only four died; and Dr Saunders shows that at Norwich, out of a possible 52 monks in 1348, at least 37 were alive in 1353; while, out of the 12 obedientiaries, the only two whose deaths are even suggested by the rolls had both been invalids, and one of them was probably 70 years old. Dr Saunders sums up: "We incline to the opinion that the whole body lived through the Black Death"; but the actual evidence he produces does not seem to warrant quite so far as this.

Everything, in fact, points to the conclusion that numbers would never have decreased, among populations which were either stationary or slowly increasing for the most part, if the institution had been sound at the core. This was set forth with remarkable frankness by one of the reforming party at the

¹ A series of monastic cases are quoted by Cardinal Gasquet in his *Great Pestilence*, pp. 67, 153, 180ff., 215ff.; but, apart from their very exceptional character, the argument is vitiated by his constant confusion between actual mortality and financial decay, to which he assigns equal cogency for his thesis.

Council of Bâle, in 1433. Martin of Senging wrote to the assembled Fathers, in probable allusion to the model house of Melk in Austria:

I know one solemn Benedictine abbey where, before its reform [in 1418] there were at most 14 monks, although they had ample revenues, in years that suffered no dearth, in which each man lived as he would, buying and selling his own prebendal portion. Moreover, among many monasteries [in that district] it was scarce possible to find one wherein there was a learned monk, unless perhaps one that was puffed up with knowledge. Yet now, in that aforesaid abbey, since its reform, there are more than 70 Religious, many of whom are graduates: moreover they flock thither daily so that the monastery will soon be unable to contain them, and, although in these times the years have been lean, and now there are continual and heavy taxes to be paid, nevertheless God provideth well for them; for their eyes wait upon Him, that He may give them their meat in due season.¹

A few words must be added concerning the normal numbers at the time when monks were most numerous in Europe: say, from 1140 to 1240. Few people realize how small was the actual monastic population of those imposing buildings, as apart from the servants to whom I hope to come in my next volume. The best evidence can be found in the large and comparatively civilized province of Rouen, where Archbishop Odo Rigaldi gives us exact information. The 166 men's houses totalled 1790 brethren: an average of between 10 and 11. The 16 nunneries had 515 nuns: an average of 32. The numbers in individual monasteries, as we have seen, had been higher in the past; partly because there were then fewer houses. The small priories, including "cells" dependent upon some abbey, were remarkably numerous. Odo was frequently compelled to remind abbots of the papal provision that no monk must ever dwell alone: the cell must at least contain a prior with one brother.² Of cells which contained no monks at all—sunk into mere granges or into nothingness—he found 19. Of the rest, 71 contained 5 or less; 12 others, 10 or less; 11 stood between 11 and 15; 10, 21-25; 5, 26-30; 10, 31-40; there were 2 of 60; and 1 each of 49, 50, 54, 93.

¹ B. Pez, *Bib. Ascet.* VIII, 527.

² For the number of monastic houses at Worms which became extinct, see Boos, III, 149 ff.

For an exceptional Order and district we have similar statistics over a much narrower field. The chronicler of Kamp gives us details for a whole group of Cistercian monasteries in north-west Germany [1280]. The men's abbeys number respectively in choir-monks 73, 81, 61, 51, 51, 51: total 368, with 599 lay-brethren. The nunneries number 50, 50, 50, 50, 42, 40, 30, 30, 30, 28, 25, 25, 24, 20, 20: total 514. This gives an average, at about their highest prosperity, of 61 choir-monks per house, with 100 lay-brethren, and 34 nuns.¹ This unusual prevalence of men's numbers over women's was due probably to two causes: the Cistercians were now at their richest as farmers and traders, while the Cistercian nuns, far stricter than the Benedictines, were proportionately less popular for the disposal of younger daughters.

In the days when the monasteries were most numerous in Europe, and Religious were no longer confined to a few scattered houses, few reached to 100 brethren. One or two abbeys of the first class may be quoted as specimens. Molesme was founded at the end of the eleventh century for 70 monks.² St-Ouen at Rouen, in 1339, had 88, but these apparently included the dependent priories.³ This was evidently the case at St-Martial-de-Limoges with its 81 brethren in 1223; those in the great house numbered only 74 in 1220 and 72 in 1270.⁴ St-Évroul, where Ordericus wrote, had 115 in [1100]. Lobbes was one of the great abbeys of Europe, and 1135 a most favourable time; but the chronicler, in recording that a great abbot then raised the number of monks to nearly a hundred, adds his own opinion that there were too many.⁵ The cathedral monastery of Sées was considered to be quite honourably maintained, in the mid-twelfth century, by a community of 35 brethren.⁶ On the other hand, nunneries were often more populated: the princess who founded Argennes (1221) provided for 90 nuns, 6 lay-sisters, and 20 priests and lay-brethren.⁷ In Germany, after the revivals stimulated by the Councils of Constance and Bâle, numbers in a few exceptional abbeys went up for a while almost to the great

¹ Eckertz, II, 369.

² *Cart. Molesme*, I, 119.

³ Farin, v, 208.

⁴ *St-Martial*, pp. 108, 126, 273.

⁵ *M.G.H.SS.* XXI, 326. The chronicler boasts of Lobbes as even greater than the abbey of St-Bertin (p. 327).

⁶ Migne, *P.L.* CCI, col. 71 c.

⁷ Hurter, II, 12.

standards of the past. Ezigen had 200, including lay-brethren and domestics; the 80 reformed houses had a total population of more than 1000.¹ In contrast to these we may put two generalizations from the last days in France. Here, in the eighteenth century, there were 755 abbeys of monks and 253 of nuns, apart from the numerous priories. Even among the 250 Cistercian abbeys, only 5 had more than 40 inmates, while 69 had 3 or less. "It may be concluded that the average population of each abbey, on the eve of the Revolution, totalled 7 or 8 Religious."² At the French Revolution, there were still 51 religious houses, male and female, in the province of Quercy. Scarcely one of the men's houses had the numbers required for a "conventus" in the strict technical sense—13 members. The women's convents were far more populous: they still provided a refuge for younger daughters. But, even with them, the 51 houses scarcely exceeded an average of 10 inmates—575 in all.³

Of English abbeys in their greatest days we may name Durham with a possible 150; Gloucester and St Albans with 100 or thereabouts. Abingdon, Bury, Westminster and Peterborough had 80, Ely 70, Tewkesbury and Evesham 67, Reading 65 (or a rather doubtful 100), Battle, Rochester and Norwich 60, Oseney and Studley 50. Of nunneries Sempringham at one time had 200,⁴ Shaftesbury 100 and Amesbury 85.

These figures are obviously very imperfect. Christ Church, Canterbury, was perhaps as populous as Westminster; so also St Augustine's. Other cathedral monasteries may have risen, here and there, to the numbers of Ely; but, in the absence of actual records, it is impossible to be more precise than this. The exhaustive study of unprinted account-rolls might take us a little farther, some day: but they are very unlikely to affect the conclusion that these vast buildings were far less thickly populated, even in their most prosperous days, than is popularly supposed.⁵

¹ Busch, p. 347; cf. pp. 359, 362-3, 374.

² Gorce, p. 34.

³ *Revue Mabillon*, 1928, p. 141.

⁴ R. Graham, p. 119.

⁵ See Appendix for a table of monastic population with dates.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DEBT AND REPUDIATION

FROM all these considerations we pass on naturally to the subject of monastic debts. The records are striking here: but we must beware of exaggerating either the figures themselves, or their significance. Génestal has pointed out that some of the thirteenth-century Norman monasteries were buying fresh lands at a time when they were in debts which to us would seem serious. This may well have been due, in some cases, to impulsiveness and an irresponsible habit of mind in matters financial. That, in fact, seems the only natural explanation of what happened at Bebenhausen in 1292. Cless, while recording that this abbey obtained papal protection from its creditors (of a kind which we shall presently see), adds the note: "It is strange that this [papal licence for repudiation of debts] happens just at the time when the monastery was most free-handed in its purchases, and may thus, no doubt, have often found itself embarrassed for payment." He apparently extends this same remark to the eight other cases of repudiation which he records.¹

But it must always be remembered that the comparative scarcity of coin, even at the end of the Middle Ages, until the great flood of silver from the New World, renders a record of temporary (as apart from chronic) indebtedness far less significant than it would be in modern society.

Money, which was scarce everywhere, was nowhere so scarce as in the houses of the landed proprietors, who amid their extravagant display found one thing always lacking—a few pounds to pay an old debt or buy a new coat. Sir John Paston, the owner of broad estates in Norfolk, was forced more than once to pawn his "gown of velvet and other gear" in London to get a few marks; when it occurred to him to raise money on his father's funeral pall, he found his mother had been beforehand with him, and had already put it in pawn. During an unwonted visit to Westminster in 1449, the poor Lady of Berkeley wrote anxiously to her husband, one of the greatest landowners in England, "At the reverence of God send money, or

¹ *Versuch. u.s.w.* II, i, 309.

else I must lay my horse to pledge and come home on my feet"; and he managed to raise £15 to meet her needs by pawning the mass book, chalices, and chasubles of his chapel. So also the Plumpton, [great gentry] in Yorkshire, were in perpetual money difficulties; servants were unpaid, bills not met, debts of £2. 10s. and £4 put off from term to term, and at last a friend who had gone surety for a debt of £100 to a London merchant was arrested.¹

On the other hand, among monks there was often something approaching to an insurance system. The English Provincial Chapter of 1343 decreed, reasonably enough, that if fire or any similar misfortune should reduce any single monastery to want, then "all the prelates of our Order should study to bring it back to a fit state by their counsel and help".²

With this preface, we may now plunge into the subject. Very valuable additions will be found in Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 203-36; Snape, *English Monastic Finance*, ch. v, and R. Génestal, *Rôle des Monastères etc.* ch. xvi, pp. 104, 161 ff.; and especially Savine, *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, pp. 210-17.

First, it is quite impossible to date monastic indebtedness from the Black Death. In many cases, the records of abbeys show such deep-rooted decay long before the Pestilence, that this marks no definite epoch in their history: e.g. *Caunes* (up to p. 149). A document of Christ Church, Canterbury, shows plainly how the plague came as the consummation of a long process of decay. It is dated September 16, 1352, or barely two years after the Black Death. Yet the monks describe how "in various manors . . . very many buildings, anciently built at great expense, were manifestly destroyed and corrupted by age, and some even threatened with irreparable and shameful ruin". The plague has rendered it impossible to carry out full inspection and repairs; therefore they approve of the archbishop's action in pulling down his manor-house of Wrotham and using the materials for that of Maidstone (II, 309). The waste of woodlands by sheer mismanagement is described at length in a document from the Cistercian abbey of Pipewell, which Hurter, by a strange misinterpretation, actually quotes in the opposite sense.³

¹ Mrs J. R. Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, I, 260.

² Pantin, II, 55.

³ II, 157. He gives no reference for his story, and had evidently not seen the original document, which is printed in Dugdale-Caley, v, 434 ff.

But Hurter notes with perfect truth: "In general, it was from within that [monastic] decay came."¹ We have already seen the judgement of a fourteenth-century canon lawyer in England; the common cause of bad finance is idleness: the heads of monasteries care less for the general good than for their own private affairs.² The Zurich canon Felix Hemmerlin, writing about 1450, points out that monks had habitually lived up to their income, and had no reserve fund for sudden disasters.³ Something of this kind transpires even from apologists. Dom Juenin, in his history of his own abbey of Tournus (p. 128), suggests four causes for the drying-up of the stream of endowments, with the increase of debts, from about 1160 onwards. First, the rise of new reformed Orders (Carthusians, Cistercians, etc.). Secondly, the bishops, no longer esteeming the monks so much as in the past, quarrelled with them about tithes; and even successful litigation is expensive. Thirdly, political reasons often compelled the popes to take refuge in France; this compelled abbots and monasteries to spend more in their honour than they could recoup by favourable bulls. Fourthly and principally, the neighbouring nobles acted as petty tyrants, and either usurped the monks' lands or had to be bought off at a heavy price. In all these cases, the temptation was to take a short view, and pledge the financial future. The medieval monk, like the modern undergraduate, found a terrible temptation in the ready credit which he could command from unscrupulous men of business. Abbot Thomas of Marlborough was perfectly right, so far as present necessities were concerned, to encourage his brethren with a reminder of the credit that their great landed possessions would give them with the Jews.⁴ Yet this, after all, was financial dram-drinking. Thomas, a lawyer and a really great man of business, might take those risks successfully: but to the ordinary ruler it was fatal.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the monks were the bankers of France, as in many other provinces. Monasteries alone were rich enough to advance fairly considerable sums; and, when they ran

¹ Hurter, II, 201.

² John of Ayton in Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, II, 151.

³ *Tract*, f. 21 a; cf. Reber, p. 315.

⁴ *Chron. Ab. de Evesham*, R.S. p. 113; cf. Vitry, *Exempla*, ed. Crane, p. 19.

short of coin, the monks drew from the church treasure; they gave up their silver censers and even the precious metalwork that crowned their altars. They lent on mortgage, and bought the property of embarrassed owners, or bought in such articles as had been pledged. But, in the thirteenth century, the rôles were inverted: the abbeys [of Normandy] contracted numerous loans from Jews; and some of these reveal downright penury.¹

Bigwood, again, in his exhaustive study of monetary transactions in medieval Belgium, lays great emphasis on this matter of monastic debts (pp. 145 ff.): "We have abundant examples to show monasteries deeply indebted towards the end of the thirteenth century, and falling victims to the crisis in real property. As early as 1246, St-Trond had to give up one of its farms because the abbey was 'oppressed with the weight of debts'." Cisoing, in 1286, described itself as "caught in a whirlpool of usury", and placed its revenues and debts at the disposition of the count; but he could do little because the brethren broke their promise to alienate no property behind his back. St-Bertin, in 1288, sold 1500 *livres* of property to pay its debts; yet in 1319 it was eaten up with usury, and the king took the management into his own hands; in 1383 it had even to sell altar-vessels and jewels to pay its debts. St-Pierre-de-Gand, in 1311, threw itself upon the count's protection against debtors. Les Dunes was "in the whirlpool of usury" in 1295, sold out heavily in 1300 to meet its debts, yet had to throw itself upon the pope in 1336 with the petition that he would drive off the creditors: "in that same year, the two Cistercian houses of Loos and Clairmarais sent him identical petitions, and even the rich abbey of Villers, in 1318, had to sell [land] 'for its intolerable burden of usury'. St-Martin-de-Tournai was in a similar situation [1324 to 1332]." St-Laurent-de-Liège sold land to relieve the burden of usury in 1304. The Premonstratensians of Middelburg, who owed money to a Florentine firm, in 1246 "refused payment, and even permitted themselves violence against the official of the Bishop of Utrecht; Innocent IV had to intervene". All these cases come from Belgium alone.

These borrowed moneys were generally lent by citizens or

¹ J.-A. Brutails, *Étude sur la condition des populations rurales du Roussillon*, 1891, p. 75.

nobles of the country; less often by the Italian merchants; by fellow-abbeys in two cases alone among those which Bigwood has been able to trace.

Medieval authorities often generalized in this same sense. Gregory IX, in 1232, lamented that "the monasteries in the province of Canterbury are grievously decayed [*enormiter collapsa*] both in temporals and in spirituals".¹ Gregory X's bull of 1274, incorporated in Canon Law by Boniface VIII, deals with many problems of what we should now call income-tax for the clergy. Its provisions, among other sidelights on the conditions of that age, show that there were a considerable number of cases in which abbeys had granted in feu, or let by contract, or given away "by mere favour", certain of their "priors, granges, houses, revenues, pensions and rents". Which party, in these cases, was bound to pay tenths to the papal court? The question is important enough to fill more than a column.²

As early as the *Institutions of the General Chapter* [1240], the assembled Cistercian Fathers had complained that "many [*plures*] of the abbeys of our Order are notoriously on the brink not only of peril but of ruin through their excessive debts". The same code prohibits the contraction of debts at interest, *ad usuras*.³ Nicholas IV, in 1288, published a bull to hinder the alienation of property by Cistercian monasteries in order to meet their heavy debts.⁴

A great deal of this can be traced in unexceptionable documents, the visitatorial reports and account-rolls of various houses. I dealt cursorily with the subject in my second volume (pp. 225 ff.). In the Normandy of [1250], the 147 most prosperous houses were in debt to the amount of nearly one-quarter of their income. The thirteenth-century visitations of the English Cluniac houses reveal an indebtedness *per monk* of £21, or about the average yearly income of two rectors of parishes. The mother-house of Cluny owed 50,000 *livres tournois*, or £12,500 sterling.

¹ M. Paris, *ad an.* For the frequency of mismanagement and debt in English houses, see Peckham's *Letters*, R.S. vol. II, introd. p. lxi, and Sir G. F. Duckett's *Charters and Records of Cluni*, II, 122-52.

² *Extrav. Commun.* lib. III, tit. 7.

³ *Nomasticon Cisterciense*, pp. 323, 326.

⁴ Richard, p. 52.

In 1485, the whole Premonstratensian Order in England pleaded debt as a reason for inability to pay taxes.¹

Almost as soon as the era of rich revenues comes in, we find occasional records of serious debt. The great abbey of St-Bénigne at Dijon, in 1196, borrowed 1700 *livres* from a single Jew at 65 per cent.; it remained eleven years in his debt.² The debts of Bury St Edmunds about that time gave Carlyle matter for one of his most picturesque pages. Bonnevaux, founded in 1117, had the good fortune to be ruled until 1195 by seven abbots of whom two were not only able administrators but also Saints of the Roman Church. Yet in 1250 the abbey was so deeply in debt that it had to sell one of its granges, at the price of 770 *livres* [£7700].³ The chronicler notes at Limoges in 1213 that the abbot of St-Martial owes 1500 *livres*, the sacristan 50, and three dependent priories 1250, 150, and 25 respectively.⁴ By 1215, the abbot's debt had risen to more than 2000 *livres*; so again in 1216. At the end of the year, this was reduced to 1100. In 1220 the abbot of St-Augustin at Limoges died 1000 *livres* in debt, and St-Martial owed 1500; two of its priories 350. At that time the abbot died: our chronicler, naming the candidates for his succession, frankly prefers the most wealthy:

I confess that I would gladly welcome the Abbot of Figeac, who was more moneyed and of nobler birth, and, as many thought, more profitable for the needs of the time. Even though the abbey had had no debts, yet 250 *livres* were needed for building the precinct wall, which was indecently open on all sides; for, during the last twenty-two years, the usurers had extorted incalculable sums from the abbots, and are on the way to do so still.

In England, this subject can be followed through many chronicles and more formal documents. It has been admirably illustrated, for the reign of Edward III and earlier, by Dr Wood-Leigh, to whose book my next page is almost entirely indebted.⁵ The kings naturally concerned themselves, often very

¹ *Coll. Anglo-Prem.* I, 82, where the editor in his text prints *indebitater*, and attempts in his footnote to alter this to *indubitanter*. For the whole of this question, see valuable details in Snape, pp. 120ff.

² Lavissee, *Hist. de France*, III, i, 346.

³ Chuzel, p. 98.

⁴ *St-Martial*, pp. 91, 97, 99, 100, 106, 108.

⁵ *Church Life in England under Edward III* (Camb. Univ. Press, 1934), ch. I.

deeply, with the administration of monasteries founded by their ancestors, or by others whose privileges had devolved by inheritance upon them. Decay in such cases meant probably omission of Masses for royal souls; and we have seen already how the second Statute of Westminster gave to "founders" of monasteries—that is, to those who had inherited the original founder's patronage—the right of resuming endowments when the services were omitted for which such endowments had been granted. That Statute, however, represented more than a generation of rude experience. In 1236 Henry III had to take strong measures in relief of Evesham: he called upon the abbey tenants for an extraordinary levy in aid of its debts: so also with other monasteries. In 1255 he interfered even more drastically to save the monks of Winchester cathedral from debts so great "that it is scarcely hoped in these days that they can be relieved from the burden thereof". That same year he intervened with St Mary's at York; in 1259 with Evesham again; in 1262 again with Winchester. It will be noted that these three were among the wealthiest of all our abbeys.

Cases of this kind increase in frequency; under Edward III the action is constantly motivated by "the statement that chantries and alms which had been established for the souls of the king's progenitors and for the king had ceased or were in danger of being discontinued". The debts are attributed explicitly to mismanagement in a large proportion of cases. Though we have, in many cases, the monks' own rehearsal of the causes of their embarrassment, the Black Death is mentioned only once, which "suggests that, though losses, suffered as a result of the plague, might be a sufficiently plausible reason for the need of appropriating a church, or securing some other concession which the ecclesiastical authorities could grant, it was necessary to plead some less general disaster in order to obtain the king's assistance". Moreover, whereas, under Edward III, thirty-two commissions for dealing with some abbey's debts sat during the twenty-one years preceding the Pestilence, there were only thirty-four during the twenty-seven which followed it; this, as Dr Wood-Legh points out, shows how easily we may exaggerate the effects of that visitation. The total result of Dr Wood-Legh's researches among the Patent Rolls shows the frequency, in the fourteenth

century, of monastic debts serious enough to call for royal intervention, even when we consider none but that minority of greater abbeys where the king could interfere as "founder".

Such indebtedness increased as time went on. There is no need to multiply instances: indeed there would be no end of such multiplication. The best test for England, perhaps, would be to take the *Victoria County History* at random for any county, and note how the monastery for which no debt or bankruptcy is ever recorded is nearly always one which has left none but the scantiest records in any direction. Take two of our greatest houses. St Augustine's, Canterbury, in 1432, seems to have outrun its income of £1036 with an expenditure of £2844.¹ In 1464 Henry Berry, a monk of that house, wrote a miserable begging letter to his cousin John Paston (afterwards Sir John).² The abbot, he writes, has lately died,

and left us in great debt...the oldest brother in our place never heard nor saw our church [*i.e.* abbey] in that misery that is now: we have cast the perils among us, and there is none other help but every brother that hath any worshipful kin or friends, every man do his part to the welfare, succour and relief of our monastery...for in London lieth to wed [in pawn] many rich jewels of ours, with other great debts...Please your goodness, for God's sake and all the Saints of heaven, and at my simple request, to have compassion upon us, ye having due surety both in obligations and pledges: in the reverence of Almighty God do your alms and charity: it shall cause you to be prayed for and all your kin as long as the church standeth; and by this means I trust to Almighty God to see my cousin William or Clement [Paston] to be steward of our lands, and so to have an interest in Kent,³ to the worship of God and you all, which ever have you in His keeping, Amen...This is the cause [of my writing]; every while they put my kin in my beard, saying I am come of lords, knights and ladies. I would they were in your danger a thousand mark,⁴ that they might know you, etc. (*sic*).

¹ *Excerpta e Compoto* (Mitchell and Hughes, 1881).

² *Paston Letters*, II, 145 ff.

³ In my last volume, I shall have occasion to emphasize the extent to which local gentry found their worldly interests bound up with those of the monasteries, so that their reports at the Dissolution must be read with much of the same caution with which we read the damnatory reports of Henry VIII's commissioners.

⁴ *Danger* in the common medieval sense of *power, control*. He thinks it would have a sobering effect on his brethren if Paston held them in bond, as creditor, for 1000 marks.

Here, again, is contemporary Westminster, about 1470.

Abbot George Norwich was asked to retire to another house for a time on account of his maladministration and debts. The debt incurred amounted to at least 3037 marks 6s. 8d., and the resources which should have met it had been reduced by alienations and grants in fee. A certain Brother Thomas Ruston, evidently a partisan of the abbot, was holding four offices, and had brought them to decay by his neglect; he had burdened the house with his own debts, and was suspected of having embezzled six or seven copes at the time when he was keeper of the vestry.¹

Matters were worse still in the Continental abbeys, and worst of all during the centuries following the Reformation, despite the enormous shrinkage of monastic population. For instance, the commendatory abbot of Pontigny who died in 1786 had spent 2,200,000 *livres* during his twenty-two years, and left a debt of 400,000.²

It is natural, therefore, that the Dissolution account-papers should reveal debt as normal, and a perfectly balanced budget as very exceptional. True, Savine has shown that it is an exaggeration to assert that, in England, "the monastic property was encumbered with enormous debts, if we consider only as 'enormous' such debts as consume the income of several years".³ The worst was Athelney, which with a net income of £210 owed £860; the next, St Sepulchre's, Warwick, which owed the gross income of two and a half years.

Monasteries are found whose debts amount to a very small portion of their annual income, as Charterhouse, Coventry, St Peter's, Gloucester, Malmesbury, Tewkesbury; while others either have no debts at all, as Ellerton, St Andrew's York, Wroxall, Wherwell; or have debts less than the amount due to them, as Repton, Barnwell.

At the same time, it is possible that monastic debts were not at their worst in 1500. The subject would need a volume or more to itself; but it seems as though an exhaustive study might show even higher figures for the generations which were buying land with one hand and borrowing with the other, than for those latter days when monastic finance had sunk more to an average level.

¹ *V.C.H. London*, p. 446; cf. Widmore, p. 116.

² *Hist. Illust. Yonne*, p. 546.

³ P. 216; see also the whole section, pp. 211-17.

Here, as in other similar fields, we may supplement the statistics of frequency by considering the attitude of the community, and especially of the higher authorities. From this point of view, again, it seems only natural to infer that debt was normal. It is very rare to find a superior actually deposed for debt—very rare, that is, in proportion to the recorded debts—and, even in such cases, we generally find that he is compensated with a liberal pension. Of this impunity we have an extreme instance at the Cluniac house of Bermondsey. Between 1271 and 1290, prior John got into the hands of a notorious usurer, Adam of Stratton, apparently in an attempt to relieve the debts of the house through speculations in land. The result was that, by dint of binding himself to 50 per cent. interest in case of default, he ran up his debt to £1000 in a few years, and “the monks complained that they could neither eat nor drink without leave of Adam”. In 1288 this had run up to £6000, and Edward I intervened to relieve the monastery. Next year, Adam was convicted of felony, and Edward restored to the abbey the manors which he had taken as pledges. Prior John was promoted to Northampton, where he increased the already existing debt. Thence he was promoted to Wenlock, where he added greatly to the debt, and falsified his accounts so unblushingly to the visitors as to extort that already-quoted complaint that “it is quite or almost impossible to elicit the truth from English monks”. The visitors reported in 1279:

No intelligent person can doubt that Wenlock will suffer seriously and get into as great or even greater confusion than Bermondsey and Northampton if he stays there long; he sells and alienates whatever he can. The general report is that he is ambitious, and is trying to get elected to Rochester and to escape from Cluniac control.

Upon this Dr Rose Graham comments: “It is almost incredible that in 1285 this Prior John was promoted to Lewes, but it is not surprising that in a few years that monastery had enormous debts to Italian merchants.”¹ In these circumstances, we need not wonder that kings began to follow the example of Continental princes, and to create a precedent for Henry VIII, by

¹ *English Eccl. Studies* (1929), p. 105; cf. *V.C.H. Surrey*, II, 68–70. For a gross case at Westminster see Widmore, p. 116 and *V.C.H. London*, I, 445–6.

taking the management of these corporations for a while into their own hands. Such interference would not only provide some remedy in each particular case, but must also have brought some other monasteries to more serious reflection.

In some of these cases the king threw his weight into the scale against the creditors, and helped the monks to repudiate part of their debts. Continental sovereigns had done this kind of thing in much earlier times; for instance, the Emperor Louis the Pious in 832 for St-Martin-de-Tours.¹ The earliest English example I happen to have met is at Roche, where Abbot Osmund reigned from 1184 to 1223.

His predecessor, Abbot Hugh de Wadworth, had in his time borrowed the great sum of 1300 marks from the Jew money-lenders of York (the Cistercian abbots, like many other Christians of those days, were by no means averse to borrowing from the Jews), which sum (Hugh having omitted to pay it) Osmund found it inconvenient to make good, wherefore he presently obtained from King Richard a remission of the whole amount, and the Jews who had lent it lost their principal and interest.²

No doubt there were many cases, as with the usurer of to-day, when justice was best obtained by interpreting the law most liberally in the creditor's favour, or even by stretching it to the breaking-point. But such decisions, even at the best, might set a bad precedent; and the commons complained to Henry IV, in 1402, that abbots and priors, after selling corrodies or pensions to layfolk, sometimes found themselves in money difficulties and escaped by repudiation, procuring royal letters of protection from their creditors. The king referred them to the chancellor.³

Naturally, however, it was popes who most frequently granted licences of repudiation. On this ground, the churchman had far greater advantage. Just as any custom, if it could secure hierarchical approval as a "pious custom", obtained thereby a binding force and was valid in Canon Law, so it was a principle that alienations of Church property were invalid unless they had been made "for the profit of the Church"—*in utilitatem*

¹ *Menses*, p. 33.

² Fletcher, p. 141.

³ *Rot. Parl.* III, 520. Dr Wood-Legh has shown me the frequency of such cases on the Patent Rolls: e.g. Stoneley, St Mary Winchester, Bruere, Bordesley, St Augustine's Bristol, Tarrent, St Mary Lancaster, all within the brief period 1358—1366.

Ecclesiae. It was in virtue of this principle that so many monasteries were disendowed in favour of colleges; and, again, that scholastic and collegiate foundations protected themselves by rehearsing in their charters that they were founded for "poor" scholars; a word which has often been mistaken by modern politicians, naturally enough, but sometimes with mischievous effect. Whatever may be the moral obligation of modern colleges to open their doors, in deserving cases, to the very poorest, that is a matter of natural charity and not of legal liability. The "poor scholars" of Winchester College are clearly defined by the founder himself; they must not possess means of their own to the value of 5 marks a year, at a time when there were sixty-seven beneficed clergy in Winchester diocese who had no more than 5 marks of stipend.¹ It was an ordinary legal fiction to represent that endowments once consecrated to charitable purposes were being transferred to other no less eleemosynary uses.

This principle, when strictly enforced, gave the monks a commodious bulwark against creditors. In 1167, Alexander III granted to the abbey of Tournus

that ye be by no means bound to pay the debts incurred by your abbey or its priories or dependencies, unless the creditors have proved by law that the aforesaid debts have been converted to the utility of the aforesaid abbey, priories or dependencies, notwithstanding any formal covenants, renunciations, or concessions or even oaths which may have intervened at the time of such contracts.²

The onus of proof thus laid upon creditors, whenever the authorities chose to insist upon it, must have been almost prohibitory. Yet here, as elsewhere, the enormous theoretical claims of the Church were frequently abandoned in practice. It was only when the debt was great enough, and the debtors sufficiently influential at the Curia, that popes stepped in. Smaller monasteries may often have got rid of their debts, but

¹ The real facts may be found, for instance, in A. F. Leach, *Schools of Medieval England*, pp. 207, 231. This enormously wealthy founder further provided that his own kin should always have first preference for admission, and the scholars can constantly be traced to great families. Rashdall, who on many other points disagreed with Leach, is in entire agreement here: university endowments indicate not a proletarian but a bourgeois scale.

² *Tournus, Preuves*, p. 168.

only after the fashion of lay debtors, by composition or by steady passive resistance. John of Ayton helps us here, with his usual rather cynical bonhomie: he must have been a companionable canon lawyer to know in private life. He is commenting on Othobon's decree against abbots, priors, etc. who grant corrodies to the pecuniary damage of their houses, "to the peril of their own souls, and to public scandal". Ayton asks: "Is, therefore, he who enters into a contract with a monastery, or with its superior, bound to prove that the money has been turned to the profit of that monastery? It would seem that he is"; and here, of course, he proceeds to discuss the pros and cons, with due references to authorities on either side. Some, he says, hold that it depends on the borrower's previous record; was he a man likely to use the loan for proper purposes? From the Church point of view, Ayton seems to incline to that side: but he concludes with the practical reflection: "However, the law of the [English] realm doth not admit this subtle or formal distinction; it reposeth upon the written contract of debt, even (as I have learned) though the money should have been cast into the sea."¹

Great abbeys, however, with their great debts, could often procure letters of defence from Rome. A register of the cathedral monastery of Canterbury contains a bull of Urban III [1185] "de debitīs non solvendis nisi in utilitatem ecclesie fuerint conversa".² So also at Glastonbury, Abbot John of Taunton [1280] procured a papal charter "that the abbey is not bound to pay its debts unless it have been proved that they had been turned to the profit of the monastery."³ Modern writers of monastic monographs, however sympathetic with the monks in general, may very naturally regard this with the same mild disapproval which is expressed by the historian of the abbey of Acey.

An act which seems very different from our modern usages was accomplished at the initiative of Abbot Jacques. The estate of Morogne, it will be remembered, had been sold at a low price to pay the French for the abbot's ransom in 1477. According to the

¹ Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, II, 150.

² M. R. James, *MSS. of St John's Coll. Camb.* p. 282, MS. 244, fol. xxi b.

³ Joh. Glaston. II. 383.

laws of that time, this sale might be annulled. "It is a certain rule", says d'Héricourt [1687-1752], "that a [religious] community can always resume possession of the property which it has alienated, whether in perpetuity or on copyright tenure [*bail emphytéotique*], when this alienation has done it any considerable damage, even though the said alienation have been carried out under all the formalities required by canon law and by the royal ordinances [of France]; for such formalities have been introduced only to show, in all ages, that the alienation has been useful or necessary for the Church." Pierre des Potots, when he bought the estate of Morogne, evidently knew this rule of current law; therefore it cannot be said that the decree which authorized the abbey to regain possession by paying an indemnity was unjust; nevertheless it remains a matter of surprise.¹

Our ancestors, however, were more or less accustomed to these things; such interpretations of the law of debtor and creditor, where the Church was concerned, had already become frequent in the first half of the thirteenth century. They were sometimes based upon a sentence in the *Digest* (lib. XII, tit. i, c. 27): "A city may be compelled to repay its debts if the moneys have been applied to its utility; otherwise those alone are bound who have contracted the debt, and not the city."² On the strength of this analogy, it was possible to annul all monastic alienations in which the full power of the abbot to dispose, and the full consent of the community as a whole to that disposal, could not be legally proved.

With this further excuse, repudiation went on apace.

Several popes came to the help of Cluny and its debtor monks against their creditors. Gregory X, Honorius IV, John XXII, decreed that the creditors of the monks must prove the sincerity of their loans and the profit which the abbey had drawn therefrom; the loan must have been "turned to profit" [*in utilitatem conversum*].³

So too, in 1247, for the great abbeys of Murbach in Alsace and Luxeuil in France, where the modern historian is scandalized to record "cette faveur singulière".⁴ But perhaps St Benedict's own abbey of Monte Cassino best illustrates the danger of thus

¹ Blanchot, p. 154.

² Valois (p. 86) quotes the cases of Bourges in 1236 and Cologne in 1246.

³ Lorain, *Cluny*, p. 192. The author goes on to suggest reasons for this favour which are not really applicable.

⁴ Baumont, p. 18.

playing fast and loose with business contracts.¹ Innocent III granted more or less explicit absolutions (on the ground that the majority of the community were not responsible for the debts and alienations of conventual property) in 1204, 1208 and 1209. Honorius III confirmed this absolution in 1216. Between 1396 and 1404, Abbot Henry obtained letters from Boniface IX granting him leave to contract a debt of 12,000 florins, and for this purpose to pledge some of their towns and fortresses to their creditors, on the definite condition

that the said creditors should by no means be bound to deduct from the principal such fruits, rents and revenues as they receive thence [*i.e.* from these pledged properties], nor to cut out anything therefrom; but that they should make such fruits wholly their own until they had been paid in full this aforesaid sum of florins; moreover, that the said Abbot Henry and his successors should be bound to repay unto the said creditors, from the possessions of the monastery, the aforesaid sum of golden florins, together with the losses and the interest and the expenses which the creditors might perchance sustain on that account, if the aforesaid money were not paid to the creditors within the term fixed beforehand by consent between them and Abbot Henry; nor should the creditors lie under the necessity (under pretext of any clause of canon or civil law, or of any privilege or indulgence) of proving that the said sum of florins had been converted to the use of the monastery.

The creditors might thus seem well guarded; moreover, they obtained formal confirmation from John XXIII (1410-15) and, possibly, from other popes. But the Council of Constance, within a year of John's deposition, published two decrees annulling all these safeguards, recalling all possessions alienated under these papal licenses, "apart from or contrary to the disposition of the law, and in prejudice of the said abbey, by whatsoever authority they may have been granted, as manifestly contrary to law and reason". But, "because it is not right (and especially for Religious) to be enriched with other men's loss", therefore the creditors may demand their principal back, with all that they can prove that they have actually and legitimately spent. We need not waste much pity on the creditors, who were probably hard men of business; but the story exemplifies the

¹ Dom Tosti, II, 284, 286, 288, 301; III, 134, 227, 230.

dangers of papal and ecclesiastical interference, however well-meant.

In 1249, the monks of St-Trond obtained a papal indult allowing them to repudiate all payments beyond the bare capital lent to them, "even though the deed of loan assert that the whole debt therein specified be actual money lent, or though it rehearse certain penalties or certain oaths which have been taken".¹ At the same time, Innocent IV authorized them to repudiate all other debts "unless it do most plainly appear that such debts have redounded to the profit of the aforesaid monastery". Yet, for moneys owing to themselves, the monks are specially empowered to enforce these by excommunication, if necessary. This Innocent IV, the pope whose reign marks a definite step of the papacy towards political rather than religious supremacy, seems to have granted such indults more frequently than all his predecessors put together; it is at this point that they become frequent in monastic cartularies. He granted one in 1250 to St Augustine's, Canterbury, "notwithstanding all oaths and confirmations".² Another step forward may be traced under Martin IV (1281-5). He granted to the nuns of St-Amand at Rouen a bull annulling all contracts to their disadvantage, even though made in due legal form before notaries, and "notwithstanding all oaths, renunciations, sales and confirmations of the Holy See, and, in general, of all deeds and contracts drawn up on this subject".³ The social historian of Württemberg notes the frequency of this practice in his own district.

When a monastery, through bad and unbusinesslike economy, or again through misfortunes and difficulties from without, had fallen into penury; when the majority and the best of its possessions had been granted in feu to the neighbouring nobles, and thus entirely lost so far as revenue was concerned, and often not even fully secured in legal possession, then at a single stroke its whole state should be restored in purity and independence as in former days. The pope wrote to a few distinguished clergy in the neighbourhood, mainly canons of cathedrals, to examine closely the condition of the monastery; and, where they found that its possessions had been alienated in a manner contrary to Church laws, to do their best to

¹ *Cart. St-Trond*, I, 234; cf. pp. 235-7, 245-6. See also Pirenne, *Polyptyque*, pp. xviff.

² Thorne, c. xxii, § 11, col. 1898.

³ Pommeraye, *St-Amand*, p. 53.

restore them to the monks, notwithstanding all pertinent charters, renunciations, oaths, penalties, or even papal confirmations.¹

He gives eight cases of this, between 1268 and 1339, and notes that in one, at least, the abbey could afford to make fresh purchases, though not to pay its debts!

This system of repudiation, with annulment of all apparent safeguards, even under the pope's own seal, naturally increased the general demoralization. Abbot Hugues de Montbozon [1320] contracted a series of loans: the credit of his abbey had fallen so low that it could no longer borrow without pledging all its goods; moreover the creditor, Richarde de Salins, was so doubtful of her security that she caused the whole of the abbey furniture, even the ciboria and chalices, to be seized in 1345. It is easy to understand this ruin. The brethren, living without any Rule (some were even laymen), disposed of those abbey goods which they could command as if they were legal possessors; they left them to their heirs; and in cases where, at death, they devised them to the chapter, they took care to impose the condition of an anniversary or some other pious work. Vital, who was then Bishop of Besançon and ruled with some distinction, realized the full danger of such a transgression of the Rule, and felt that he must have recourse to an extreme remedy. He annulled all alienations, donations and promises made contrary to the interests of the abbey, and commanded his official to pronounce ecclesiastical penalties against all who should detain its property.²

If such cases gradually become rarer among the later records, it is probably because the papacy found it quite impossible here, as in the matter of usury, to stem economic forces. Firm and continued insistence, in either case, would have led to something like class-war between Commerce and the Church. Therefore the monasteries confined themselves to less hazardous speculations, and the worst debts of later days were generally due to such patent malpractices on the part of abbot, obedientiaries or convent as could scarcely be defended. Yet here and there we still find such a case as that of Vendôme, where Eugenius IV, in 1447, decreed the restitution "of all the goods which Abbot Jean de la Font and his predecessors had given to certain clerics,

¹ Cless, II, i, 308.

² Marquiset, p. 104.

some for life and others for a considerable time, even though some of them should have obtained papal letters of confirmation for the transfer, *in forma communi*".¹

And still the popes, naturally enough, often resisted lay interference, even where, to our minds, equity would seem to call for it. In 1405 the earl of Arundel, as "founder" of Castleacre, "exacted from [the prior, on his recent election] an oath not to alienate its woods, corrodies or other possessions, nor manumit its serfs without licence or consent of the said earl and his successors". This was in the spirit of the second Statute of Westminster; and perhaps the earl had chosen it as an easier course than to wait first till the damage was done, and then procure a writ of *cessavit* against the priory. The prior petitioned the pope and received absolution from his oath "notwithstanding any custom (which should rather be called an abuse—*corruptela*) to the contrary".²

Here and there we get evidence from the worldly side, as this which is cited by W. Heywood in his *Ensamles of Fra Philipppo* (Siena, 1901, p. 147). He is speaking of the Italian merchant-bankers.

"Cursed and vituperated, robbed and defrauded, and in addition to everything else, from time to time excommunicated, they saw themselves surrounded on every side by treachery and hatred, without any effectual legal remedy against dishonesty and violence. To break faith with them, to defraud them of their due, appeared to every body a holy work, a virtuous action, which was profitable alike for this world and for the next."³ Writing from Troyes, in 1262, Andrea Tolomei gives an endless list of Bishoprics and Abbeys to which loans had been made which it was impossible to collect. Some of the recalcitrant debtors offered specious excuses; others deliberately refused to pay, like the Abbess of Provins, who openly declared that she did not intend to pay "*per lo fatto dello scumunicamento*".⁴ Whereat he exclaims: "It seems to me that no one is to be found who is willing to pay the Sienese any of the money which they ought to have." And elsewhere he adds (clearly understanding that the pretext of the excommunication was nothing but a bad excuse of bad

¹ *Vendôme*, II, 306.

² *C.P.L.* VI, 78; see Appendix.

³ C. Paoli, *Siena alle Fiere de Sciampagna* (Siena, Lazzeri, 1898), pp. 32, 33.

⁴ "On account of the fact of excommunication", launched by the Church against usurers. Heywood refers to Tommasi, II, 13; F. Donati, "Lettere politiche del secolo XIII", in the *Bullettino sienese di storia patria*, IV (1897), pp. 101-6.

payers): "And if the Pope should send hither to order that the Sienese should be taken, both they and their goods, as they say that he is minded to do, I believe that his mandate would be obeyed, in that these be evil men who would gladly rob their neighbours and then put the blame on the Pope; and assuredly they will rob their neighbours if they can."

It was otherwise with the usurers, however, when they were fortunate enough to have the same interests as the pope. Innocent IV, who did so much to quash other debts, wrote very sternly to the official of the Bishop of Trier in defence of certain Florentine merchants. A quarrel had arisen between him and the Premonstratensian abbey of Middelburg as to a restitution of moneys, wherein the auditor of the diocese of Trier cited the abbot by letter and by messenger. "But they [the abbot and convent], having beaten the said messenger and robbed him violently of the papal rescript, have since refused to answer before you concerning this case." Therefore the bishop's official is to punish the abbot and convent, and compel them to restore the money to the merchants.¹

If the Gentile suffered thus, perhaps no more than he often deserved, still more the Jew. There is, in Finke's collection, a letter of extraordinary interest for the financial relations of Religious and their Jewish creditors.² In 1286 the newly founded Dominican monastery at Zofingen bought a site from the Counts of Froburg for 200 marks down, and with promise to shoulder the Counts' liabilities to the Jews; upon this site they began to build their choir. This transaction seems to have been unbusinesslike; for it was afterwards asserted that these debts amounted to another 200 marks. But this Dominican settlement was hated as an intrusion by the canons of the old collegiate church, who stirred up all possible trouble for the friars: both sides showed great violence not only in word but (according to formal complaints) in deed also. At length, in 1288, the Dominican church was actually torn down, and the brethren were compelled gradually to disperse. The Jews, anxious to secure their own loan, put their bailiffs into the friary, who of course had the legal right of living there at the friars' expense

¹ *Reg. Inn. IV*, 1, 255 (No. 1698).

² *Ungedruckte Dominikanerbriebe des XIII. Jhdts.* p. 117; cf. pp. 32, 125.

until the debt should be settled.¹ Then the Dominican Prior Provincial, Hermann v. Minden, sent commissioners to "the Rulers of the Synagogues and Chiefs of the Jews at Mainz and Worms"; for, as he says, "we must believe that the Jews will be found more merciful than the canons, if they be more fully informed of the fact". The envoys are to begin with threats; if the pound of flesh is exacted, the patient will be killed; thus

the creditors will lose their money; and never again will there be such peace as heretofore between the aforesaid [Dominicans] and the Jews; nay, rather, since it is permitted to us to glory in our tribulations, our cry shall no longer be suppressed, that the Jews have conspired with our enemies to cast forth our name as an evil thing, in their hatred of Christ crucified. If this is to be so, then we repent to have been such kindly interpreters whenever they were unduly vexed; we repent to have been so slow to execute the papal mandate which bade us preach unto them God's word for their salvation. I still have a papal bull to that effect; and if this be renewed, as the Lord's word is bound thereunto, our zeal will be more fervent.²

From this, they may pass to another tone, and set forth to the Jews how "when the Brethren are expelled and violently despoiled, they ought to spare them for God's sake who brought forth their own fathers from the iron furnace of Egypt, if indeed there be any bowels of pity in them". Finally, "if ye can find no favour in their eyes, show them the pope's letter, wherein he hath assumed the guardianship both of our buildings and of our lands; and thence go on to appeal to the Apostolic See against the whole Jewish community, and expressly against those of Zofingen and Lucerne". The embassy was unsuccessful; a year later Hermann still complains that his brethren of Zofingen are confronted with the beast of Daniel with his triple row of teeth: "clergy, and layfolk, and Jews". He concludes:

I am filled with indignation, if the Jews are to hold up as a gazing-stock the shame of Christ crucified in the person of those preachers of that Cross which to them is a stumblingblock. Be ye not therefore

¹ "Men in possession" are here called *obsides*; in France at this time they had the significant title of *comestores*, "eaters", who fed on the house as moths feed on a garment (*Olim*, II, 241).

² Finke quotes from the *Annals of Colmar*, under the year 1278: "At this time there came a papal bull to Colmar, wherein it was written that the Prior of the German Province and his brethren should faithfully preach the Catholic faith to the faithless Jews."

troubled if it be our lot to suffer at the hands of the Jews and to glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, when the Black Death gave an excuse for accusing the Jews as poisoners and massacring them wholesale in many parts of Europe, doubtless many monastic creditors were among those who benefited. "After the great pogrom of 1350 at Eger, the emperor Charles IV proclaimed the nullity of all the recognizances for debt which the monks [of Waldsassen] had given to the Jews."¹

¹ Muggenthaler, p. 175.

CHAPTER XXXIV

RETRENCHMENT AND RESTORATION

ALL that has been written in these preceding chapters had to be said, and the evidence might be reinforced if necessary; but this must not lead us to view the question out of its due perspective. We must bear in mind difficulties of travel and communication; scarcity of coin; a tangle of customs which often superseded law both in Church and State; and chronic disturbances which kept all but the luckiest countries and periods in a fever of actual or imminent war, far beyond even the experience of our present generation. We are not always sufficiently grateful for the advantages (after all allowances have been made) of mere business regularity and the business checks which are bound up with it: the extent, for instance, to which a twopenny receipt-stamp relieves us from all temptation to suspect our neighbour's probity and anticipate trouble. The worst quarrels often come from mere misunderstandings: and, though a Senegalese trader may have more honesty in his own conscience and before God than a London banker, we cannot so safely depend that he will not cheat us.

I have always strongly insisted that the greatness of the Middle Ages consisted far less in what men actually did, than in what they tried to do. The routine-minds of this period did indeed rest in that illusion of perfection which Professor De Wulf emphasizes, and in virtue of which they often claimed the right of persecuting innovators. Moreover, routine-minds are the majority in every age, and nearly always the ruling majority. But there were always some, even among the most conservative churchmen, who seethed with that "large and liberal discontent" which is the salt of society; and to such men we must pay homage in proportion to the supineness or even the active opposition of those around them. The deepest interest of human life—next to that of love, and, constantly, bound up indissolubly with love—is that of Greek tragedy: the man's struggle against circumstances, the Soul's reaction to Fate. It comes out equally

in pious Job's "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him", and in agnostic Henley's

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.¹

And, though the records of monastic finance tell very plainly—tell, indeed, with an emphasis under which we must be on constant guard against exaggeration—that these corporations did not succeed much better than a lay corporation would have succeeded, yet the sad story is frequently redeemed by some hero of the cloister, and we must allow also for the certainty that there were other mute inglorious heroes of the same kind. Here, as in other sections of this book, it will be well to follow mainly the chronological order.

One of the earliest records of the kind, and certainly one of the most charming, is that of the Abingdon Chronicle.² Domesday shows this as a very wealthy abbey; it had then "a very large and rich portion of the county of Berks", with seven manors in Oxfordshire and two others farther afield. In 1097 the abbot died, and Rufus, with his usual rapacity, kept the office vacant and enjoyed the abbatial revenues, leaving prior Modbert to pay these into his hands and to manage the rest for the convent. This prior (says the chronicler)

so far endowed his kinsfolk and nephews from the abbey possessions that only eighteen ploughlands were left out of eighty, and of fifty monks only thirty-two remained. . . . At that time the abbey cloister was ruined, with the chapter-house and dormitory, so that the monks lay in the minster and held their chapter there. The manors also were so ruined that the monks had scarce food to eat.

Then Rufus died, and with that came the chance of an election.

By reason of these miseries the monks decreed that they should busy themselves with fasting and prayer, that God and Our Lady might grant them a fit abbot such as the house needed; and so it came to pass. One night, while the others slept, a certain boy named Nicholas was watching at the altar of the Holy Trinity, weeping and praying that the Lord might help them in all these calamities. Then

¹ *Echoes*, No. iv.

² R.S. II, 285 ff.; cf. Dugdale-Caley, I, 508. For the whole of this subject, see also Snape, pp. 134 ff.

there appeared to him a lady most fair and comely, saying, "Boy, Nicholas, wherefore weepest thou?" Said he, "O Lady, we have no pastor, nor any man to help us; not even mine uncle Modbert; for we are in the utmost misery." "Fear not," said the Lady. "Say unto the prior and convent that they shall take mine own chaplain, the cellarer of Malmesbury, Faricius by name, and he shall provide well for you: for I will be with him." So, when day broke, the boy told his vision to the prior and the rest of the brethren; at the hearing whereof they all praised the Lord and Our Lady. [The boy who had this vision lived on unto the days of abbot Ingulf [1130-58].] Then the prior, with two brethren, went to King Henry, that he might grant Faricius the cellarer of Malmesbury to rule Abingdon. The king, hearing this, consented gladly, for he loved him well. Then the king gave Modbert the abbey of Middleton.

Faricius was an Italian by birth, eminent in all learning and especially in medicine.

He began forthwith to build the church and the monks' offices, which were all ruined and destroyed. He built all from the very foundations, as we see them to-day [A.D. 1220]; to wit, cloister, chapter-house, dormitory, refectory, lavatory, cellar, kitchen, and two parlours, one eastwards by the chapterhouse and another westwards under the abbot's chapel. He built almost the whole church, and the tower as high as the windows... He increased the number of monks to eighty from the twenty-eight whom he had found... In those days Archbishop Anselm died and Faricius was chosen for that see; but the bishops of Lincoln and Sarum withstood this, saying that we should not have an archbishop whose practice of medicine brought him into contact with women.¹

From Henry, partly by purchase and partly by prayers, he procured the restitution of many possessions lost through the Danish invasions. He instituted paid professional scribes for writing books, and greatly increased the library.

Desiring to raise his eighty monks to 100, he appealed to King Henry, who was then dwelling in Normandy for certain business, to sell him the vill of Sutton; for the peasants of that vill gave great trouble to the abbot and to the abbot's men. But the king deferred this until his return to England.

It was then too late.

The precentor... on the Feast of the Purification [Feb. 2, 1121] had prepared a certain dish, and brought it to the abbot as he sat

¹ For the original Latin, see Appendix.

at table [*recumbenti ad mensam*]. When the abbot had tasted this, forthwith he began to be sick. So he rose from table and sent word to the Bishop of Sarum and the Abbot of Gloucester, Serlo by name, and to the abbots of Malmesbury and Shrewsbury, naming unto them the day and the hour of his departure from this life. Then he laid upon the high altar thirty pounds of gold for gilding that candlestick of seven arms which he himself had bought at the price of thirty pounds of silver. Moreover he commanded that they should give to the poor all that money which he had collected for the purchase of Sutton. As the hour of death drew nigh he revolved always in his mouth that verse *Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house*, and with those words he gave up the ghost at the sixth hour, even as he foretold, and in the 16th year of his abbacy.

Samson's restorative work at Bury, too long for full quotation here, is detailed in Jocelin's *Chronicle* (pp. 22 ff.) and in the still more accessible *Past and Present* of Carlyle. He inherited the enormous debt of £3052 sterling, which should be multiplied by at least forty: yet he paid all this off in twelve years. The abbot's income (as apart from that of the monks) was £326. Samson was a typical great administrator, doing his best with a motley inheritance and under very embarrassing commitments. At St-Bertin-de-St-Omer, at the beginning of the twelfth century, Abbot Lambert instituted a reform which ended by changing a community of "scarce a dozen monks" "who were hardly able to subsist there", into one of "one hundred and fifty brethren, rich in all abundance"—*omni abundantia refertos*.¹ At Molesme, in 1198, the new abbot found a debt of 22,000 *livres*. Within a short time he reduced this to 1500*l.*, even though he had spent meanwhile 1700*l.* on repairs of the buildings.² In 1211 Innocent III committed to the Bishop of Langres and the duke of Burgundy the administration of St-Bénigne-de-Dijon, deeply in debt; these men paid off 2000*l.* in a single year.³

Very striking, again, was the recovery of St-Trond. John, abbot from 1232 to 1239,

within three years, borrowed from the usurers of Troyes a sum of 2005 *livres tournois*. In the fourth year, the repayment of this loan having been neglected, the abbot made his account with the Lom-

¹ Migne, *P.L.* CLXXX, cols. 100, 101.

² *Cart. Molesme*, 1, 172-3.

³ *Register of Innocent III*, lib. xi, ep. 251 (*P.L.* CCXV, col. 1555); lib. xiv, ep. 29 (*P.L.* CCXVI, col. 405).

bards; and, counting principal and interest and expenses together, our abbey was bound to the usurers for 6200*l.*, to be paid in four years; of which sum the abbot paid to the usurers meanwhile 2007*l.* Thus, after his death, the abbey still owed these Lombards 3540*l.*, not including the interest... In 1239 the prior and convent [at the abbot's death] borrowed from the aforesaid Lombards, through a citizen of Liège, 800*l. paris*, which make 1200*l. tournois*.

The next abbot, Thomas (1239-48), inherited this total debt of 4740 *livres tournois*.

In the year of his election he paid of these outstanding debts 720*l. paris*; then he accounted with the Lombards and paid 1766*l. paris*. Thus the sum-total of repayments by Thomas and John, at different times, was 4647*l. paris*; so that the abbey still owed, by reason of this loan, 2747*l. paris*.

At his death, William was elected (1248-72), a scholar and a business-man; he had been secretary to the King of Germany, and "some say that on one day he put on cowl, next day he took the monastic vows, and the third day he was elected abbot". Then

these Lombards, seeing that for the last three years all periodical repayments of the loan had ceased, demanded grievous and intolerable usury; so that the abbot, however unwillingly, was compelled to plead with them for more than six years at the Roman Court; and at length he made an account with them, to pay 2480*l. paris* by instalments within ten years. This sum he paid within the time stipulated, except that, failing sometimes to pay the instalments at the appointed term, he paid at different times 74*l. paris* more as interest... The sum of all the aforesaid payments which abbot William paid for his predecessors' debts within twenty-two years was 2183 marks of Liège. *Item*, the sum that he paid as twentieth at command of pope Alexander [IV], and for the cardinals and legates in the years 1261 and 1271, 2860 marks of Liège; *item*, for damage of divers wars and tempests, 2000 marks of Liège. So the total sum which the abbey paid for the usurious contract with the Lombards, beyond and beside the principal, came to 4000*l. paris*, which at that time are said to have been worth £6000 black *tournois*.

The final extinction of the debt (we are told on p. 402), was due to the provost of St-Trond, who in 1271 left a sum of 660 *livres* to the abbey.¹

¹ *M.G.H. Scriptt.* x, 394ff.

Sometimes these great successes alternated with equal failures. About A.D. 1235 William was elected Abbot of St-Vanne at Verdun. He had first distinguished himself at Flavigny by the restoration of that priory, which earned his promotion to the abbacy of St-Mansuy. There

he found the monastery decayed both spiritually and temporally, and burdened with grievous debts. He discovered that almost all the revenues were submerged by the deepest flood of debts; that chalices, texts [of the Gospel], crosses, chasubles and the best copes had been pawned, so that delay in repayment of the principal was breeding more usurious interest. He repaired the church roof, the carved woodwork [or ceiling?], and the enclosure of the courtyard; he improved the other offices; by his industry and labour he diminished the debts and lightened the usury; he redeemed all the pledges; he increased the revenues; he obtained the church of Clateigny with its appurtenances from the count of Toul, and the altarge of Germai and Bures with their appurtenances from the bishop. Many other things also, wherefrom a hundred pounds of yearly revenue might come to the abbey of St-Mansuy, he acquired within the space of eight years and a half wherein he ruled there.¹

Yet in 1349, when the monks tried to assert their ancient right of electing their own abbot,

Raymond Dachie obtained it by grace of the pope. In 1353 (again by grace of the pope), Raymond was succeeded by Gérard de Voudenay. He greatly squandered the abbey goods, pledged rents and revenues, pawned letters and charters most necessary to us, impoverished and despoiled our tenants and subjects, and damaged the abbey to the sum of more than 20,000 francs; and he reduced the abbey itself to such poverty that matins were sung there scarce twelve times in the year.²

The monastery of St-Martin at Tournai was founded in 1092 by a real Saint;³ in about ten years, it had risen to thirty monks. Then the Saint was succeeded by a man of business, who, within seventeen years, amassed seventeen rectories and many other endowments. Yet as early as 1146 we find that converts no longer press in, but need to be coaxed into this rich house. Thenceforward the records are scanty until 1289, when we find

¹ *P.L.* cciv, col. 985; compare *ibid.* coll. 994 (Theobald, 1319), 995 (John, 1382), 996 (Stephen, 1431).

² *P.L.* cciv, col. 995.

³ De Smet, *Chron. Belges*, II, 538-9, 553-5; cf. I, 116ff.

the house fairly flourishing, with a population of sixty-one monks. Then came a negligent abbot. Almsgiving was neglected; the revenues were wasted; the visitors tried to interfere, but in vain. At last, the abbot was richly pensioned off, and his successor paid 4500 florins to the papal court for ratification of his election. Having paid no interest during his five years' reign, he died in 1331 owing 17,000 florins to the pope's Italian merchants alone; *i.e.* nearly £3000 sterling of that time. Meanwhile, the sixty-one monks had shrunk to forty-four. Then came a new abbot, a man of learning and of business, Gilles li Muisis, who has left us chronicles both in prose and in verse. He compounded with the desperate bankers (who had received no interest for ten years) for a lump payment of 7500 florins; a sum which he paid off in sixteen years, mainly by alienations of convent property for the lifetime of the several debtors.

Here, again, are two similar cases from great English abbeys. At Winchcombe, in 1282, Abbot Walter de Wykwane found a debt of £620 "and more"; the abbey was further burdened with fifteen corrodies, or life-pensions. During his reign of thirty-two years, he had to pay more than £1200 in taxes to pope and king; yet the long list of his acquisitions may be read in Dugdale (ed. Caley, II, 304). The first four items are one rectory, one grange and two hamlets. "Yet", adds the chronicler, "all this he acquired without alienating or pledging one halfpenny of convent property." At Evesham, Abbot Roger's wholesale speculations, and the costs of litigation, left a heavy debt in 1213. The church was half-ruinous; services could be held only where the stone vaulting kept off the rain that dripped elsewhere through the roof; the monks were half-clothed and half-fed. In 1230 Thomas of Marlborough was elected; he began at once to repay the debt; he and his successors not only cleared it off, but made considerable purchases of fresh estates, church ornaments, etc. Once more, however, in [1260] Abbot Henry found a debt of 1400 marks; yet "in a short time he satisfied all the creditors unto the last farthing". Once again, under Abbot Hawksbury (1467-77) "great folk flocked so frequently to the abbey that its revenues sufficed not; thus he left it indebted to the sum of 1000 marks....His successor was William Upton...who, finding the abbey burdened with a debt

of 1000 pounds (*sic*), paid it all off.”¹ About 1260, St-Ouen-de-Rouen owed 6000 *livres* at usurious interest; but the next abbot “acquitted the abbey of all that it owed, and left it excellently endowed with many great possessions”. In 1303 the new abbot found its barns full, and there were 3080*l.* in the treasury. He spent on building the existing choir and transepts, with other edifices, 63,936*l.*, beyond the yearly cost of the abbey.² Abbot Peter the Second of Cluny (1322-44) found the abbey in debt to the extent of 80,000 *livres*; he managed to pay all this off, and “left the monastery in a great state [of prosperity]”.³ Richard Wallingford, in 1327, found St Albans owing £5000, and further wasted by more than £15,000 raised and spent by his predecessor to the damage of the abbey estates: in addition to this, there were nearly £1000 to pay to Rome for confirmation of his election. Yet by personal parsimony, and a strict watch over the finances, which earned him considerable unpopularity, he seems to have restored the abbey to solvency during the six years of his reign.⁴

The next story may be given more fully, since it shows the difficulties in detail, and the incompleteness even of a manful victory. At Romainmotier, in 1358, the Cluniac visitors report that the prior has kept up the wonted number of monks, pious and disciplined and hospitable.

Again, he doth manfully and constantly pursue and preserve his jurisdiction, both spiritual and temporal; moreover, two years ago, he hath wholly redeemed and regained, at the price of 1220 florins, the township of Wufflens, with pure and just lordship and with all its jurisdiction and rights, which township had been alienated to perpetuity by his predecessors some sixty years past; and now he holds it in hand, with all its rights. In this he was helped by the assistance, counsel and favour of the reverend father, the lord abbot of Baume-les-Messieurs; yet in truth, in order to complete this redemption and payment, he borrowed by formal deposit 500 florins, but hath diminished that debt this year by 100 florins of gold. Again, he hath diminished by 160 florins of gold the other debts of his predecessors, which they owed at Orbe at usury, wherefrom the creditors received yearly eight quarters of corn. On the other hand,

¹ *Chron. Evesham*, R.S. pp. 274, 276-7, 280, 339.

² *Chronique de St-Ouen*, pp. 10, 11, 17, 23.

³ *Bib. Clun.* col. 1671.

⁴ *Gesta Abbatum*, 11, 178ff.; Dugdale-Caley, 11, 196.

a certain suit hath been brought of late by Peter, lord of Montricher, concerning the jurisdiction and pure lordship over the priory's men in the township of Pampigny. This he hath prosecuted manfully, at very great trouble and expense, before the counts of Varmuc and Vaud; nay, he doth yet prosecute, constantly and most earnestly, this yet undecided case; and rest assured that, but for this law case, he was striving and purposing effectually to diminish the said debts by a greater sum.¹

A similarly chequered story comes to us from Montier-la-Celle, where an efficient and business-like abbot quadrupled the revenues in the forty years from 1494 to 1534. After his death, the new abbot enriched his relations by illegal grants from the conventual revenues; but "this was nothing very scandalous, for those times". Moreover he, again, was able rather to increase than to diminish the total revenues.²

Even in nunneries, with their heavy business disadvantages in those times, we find here and there a heroine of finance. The Wherwell Chartulary gives an admirable character to Euphemia, who was abbess from 1226 to 1257.

It is most fitting that we should always perpetuate the memory, in our special prayers and suffrages, of one who ever worked for the glory of God, and for the weal of both our souls and bodies. For she increased the number of the Lord's handmaids in this monastery from forty to eighty, to the exaltation of the worship of God. To her sisters, both in health and sickness, she administered the necessities of life with piety, prudence, care, and honesty. She also increased the sum allowed for garments by 12*d.* each. The example of her holy conversation and charity, in conjunction with her pious exhortations and regular discipline, caused each one to know how, in the words of the Apostle, to possess her vessel in sanctification and honour. She also, with maternal piety and careful forethought, built, for the use of both sick and sound, a new and large farmery away from the main buildings, and in conjunction with it a dorter and other necessary offices. Beneath the farmery she constructed a water-course, through which a stream flowed with sufficient force to carry off all refuse that might corrupt the air.

Moreover she built there a place set apart for the refreshment of the soul, namely a chapel of the Blessed Virgin, which was erected outside the cloister behind the farmery. With the chapel she enclosed a large space, which was adorned on the north side with pleasant

¹ Duckett, *Vis. and Chap.-General*, p. 348.

² *Revue Mabillon*, xxi (1931), 99, 201-2.

vines and trees. On the other side, by the river bank, she built offices for various uses, a space being left in the centre where the nuns are able from time to time to enjoy the pure air. In these and in other numberless ways, the blessed mother Euphemia provided for the worship of God and the welfare of the sisters. But notwithstanding all this, she also so conducted herself with regard to exterior affairs, that she seemed to have the spirit of a man rather than a woman. The court of the abbey manor, owing to the useless mass of squalid outbuildings, and the propinquity of the kitchen to the granary and old hall, was in much danger of fire; whilst the confined area and the amount of animal refuse was a cause of offence to both the feet and nostrils of those who had occasion to pass through. The mother Euphemia, realizing that the Lord had called her to the rule of the abbey of Wherwell, not that she might live there at ease, but that she might, with due care and despatch, uproot and destroy and dissipate all that was noxious, and establish and erect that which would be useful, demolished the whole of these buildings, levelled the court, and erected a new hall of suitable size and height. She also built a new mill, some distance from the hall, and constructed it with great care in order that more work than formerly might be done therein for the service of the house. She surrounded the court with a wall and the necessary buildings, and round it she made gardens and vineyards and shrubberies in places that were formerly useless and barren, and which now became both serviceable and pleasant. The manor house of Middleton, which occupied a dry situation and was close to a public thoroughfare, and was further disfigured by old and crumbling buildings, she moved to another site, where she erected permanent buildings, new and strong, on the bank of the river, together with farmhouses. She also set to work in the same way at Tufton, in order that the buildings of both the manor houses in that neighbourhood might be of greater service and safer against the danger of fire. These and other innumerable works, our good superior Euphemia performed for the advantage of the house, but she was none the less zealous in works of charity, gladly and freely exercising hospitality, so that she and her daughters might find favour with One Whom Lot and Abraham and others have pleased by the grace of hospitality. Moreover, because she greatly loved to honour duly the House of God and the place where His glory dwells, she adorned the church with crosses, reliquaries, precious stones, vestments and books. And because the bell tower above the dorter fell down through decay one night, about the hour of mattins, when by an obvious miracle from heaven, though the nuns were at that moment in the dorter, some in bed and some in prayer before their beds, all escaped not only death but even any bodily injury, she caused another bell tower of worked stone to be erected, conformable

to the fair appearance of the church and rest of the buildings, of commanding height, and of exquisite workmanship. But as she advanced in years, towards the end of her life, there was imminent danger of complete collapse of the presbytery of the church; by the advice of skilled builders, she caused the presbytery to be taken down to the last stones of the foundations; and because the ground was found to be undermined and unsafe, she caused the damp soil to be dug out to a depth of twelve feet till firm and dry ground was found, when, having invoked the grace of the Holy Spirit, with prayers and tears she laid with her own hands the first stone of the foundations. Moreover she rejoiced to have found favour with God, so that before her last days were ended she saw this work that she had begun brought to its desired end. Thus she, who had devoted herself when amongst us to the service of His house and the habitation of His glory, found the due reward for her merits with our Lord Jesus Christ, through the prayers and merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the blessed apostles Sts Peter and Paul, in whose honour, at the instigation of the abbess Euphemia, this church was dedicated, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost ever liveth and reigneth, God through all the ages of eternity. Amen. (*V. C. H. Hants*, II, 132.)

In none of those cases is there definite indication of what might justly be called financial genius, apart from the genius of "taking infinite pains". Samson of Bury is one of the greatest, and may be fairly taken as representative, of these economic reformers. His work and theirs was mainly one of patience, honesty, and common sense. At St-Trond and Tournai, at St Albans, Winchcombe and Evesham, there is no trace of such an innovation as that of the later German reformers of monachism, who erected saw-mills and factories, and competed with the capitalism of their age. Nor, again, did Samson or his fellows lead an economic revolution, like the early Cistercians, by reclaiming swamps and turning moorland into vast sheepwalks. They simply checked the prevalent waste; bought from the Papal Court, when need required, and raised the necessary money by temporary instead of permanent alienations of land. The recuperative force of monastic finance was enormous, because the endowments were so rich and so solid. Nunneries and small houses might fall, never to rise again; but the average monastery needed no more than ordinary prudence and financial probity. Gascoigne insists that, even in his day [1450], if monasteries are found to be really doing the work for which they were founded,

they can not only balance their budget but increase their landed property.¹

Généstal, in his study of the thirteenth-century Norman monasteries, sums up to the same effect. "As to those others [which were in debt], their bad financial position was, in most cases, the result of neglectful management, and a few measures of wise administration sufficed to set them up again." He cites two concrete cases, from 1248 and 1262.²

In one case, however, we have a man of genius; and, fortunately, much of the story has come down to us under his own hand. This is Suger of St-Denis, whose doings are recorded in his letters and charters, in a *Life* by one of his devoted younger brethren, and in a special treatise drawn up by himself in his last years at the desire of the community, *Of His Own Deeds*. Therefore I cannot more fitly conclude my volume than with a detailed account of this man's achievements.

Suger was of humble birth, probably from St-Omer, a city too little known to the modern traveller, which sent many prosperous merchants to Lynn and Norwich in Chaucer's day, and Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was born in 1082, and at the tender age of ten he was vowed to the abbey of St-Denis, "from my mother's breast", as he puts it with some exaggeration. Thirty-one years later, already favourably known to popes and princes, he was elected abbot; he ruled for twenty-nine more, and died in his seventieth year (1152).

Nature (writes his biographer)³ had given him a short and slender body: moreover his assiduous labours had taken much from his strength. Yet parsimony of life, and moderation in such foods as provoke to gluttony, and diligent self-control brought him, with God's help, to old age. His food was neither very coarse nor very choice; he never complained of its quality nor of its mode of preparation. He tasted moderately of whatsoever was set before him: the rest he sent on to the poor, without whom I never saw him eat. He never ate flesh except when constrained by bodily infirmity and compelled by his friends' authority. He touched no wine, until he had most plentifully mingled it with water; in summer-time he very frequently drank pure water. This man, amid all the favours that [God] had granted him, lacked this one gift, that, after he came to

¹ *Lib. Ver.* p. 147.

² P. 163; cf. p. 164.

³ *Œuvres*, pp. 388 ff.

the abbacy, he never became fatter than he had been as a mere monk; whereas almost all other men, however lean they may have been before, after the laying on of hands are wont forthwith to wax fat in cheeks and belly, not to say in heart also. At all times, summer or winter, since his sleep was very brief, he would either read after supper or listen long to some reader, or would instruct those that sat by with noteworthy examples. His reading was in the authentic books of the Fathers, or sometimes somewhat of ecclesiastical history. And, as he was most pleasant, so he would sometimes tell as from himself, sometimes as from others, whatsoever he had seen or heard of the deeds of brave men, sometimes even until midnight. He slept so moderately on his bed that this was neither too austere nor very delicate. He especially avoided all appearance of doing what might seem notable in dress or in manner of life.

The writer goes on to extol his regularity and fervency in prayer, and compassion for sick brethren, on whose account he would pay doctors heavily from his own purse. When it came to rebuilding the minster, "he fetched from all parts of the kingdom various artificers; masons and carpenters, painters, smiths and bronze-founders, goldsmiths and jewellers, each most skilled in his own art". Yet for his own comfort he built nothing but "that humble cell adjacent to the church, scarce ten feet in breadth and fifteen in length, which he had chosen for himself ten years before his death, that therein he might recollect his own life, which he confessed to having long scattered among secular affairs". Here, such hours as he could spare for himself were spent in reading and meditation: he was never less alone than in this solitude. "When he slept here, straw was his featherbed, and for soft linen sheets it was spread with a rough rug, covered sometimes with honourable coverlets." It was this last phase of his life which extorted the admiration of St Bernard, who had almost certainly depicted Suger in that famous passage, "I am a liar, if I have not seen an abbot bring sixty mounted men and more in his train. You would say, if you saw such [prelates] ride past, that they were not fathers of monasteries but lords of castles: not rectors of souls but princes of provinces."¹ Now, however, in these later days, the Saint could describe his fellow-abbot as one who "in Caesar's presence was as one of the Roman Senate, and in God's sight as one of the heavenly

¹ *Ep. ad Guliel.* xi (*P.L.* CLXXXII, col. 914).



A GREAT ABBOT'S DEATHBED



court". The biographer William quotes these words with pardonable pride; and he can give concrete instances.

David also, the God-fearing king of the Scots, sent gifts to Suger with familiar letters; to wit, the teeth of sea-monsters of marvellous bigness and no small price. God be my witness that I have seen him once sitting upon a low footstool as reverent assessor to the French king, with a ring of nobles around him, and Suger dictating his precepts as to inferiors, while they hung with all diligence and attention upon his words. When this colloquy was ended, he would have escorted the king, but he would not suffer Suger to move from his place or to rise from his seat (p. 384).

Elsewhere, William frankly confesses that he cannot see the man except as an adoring disciple; yet the portrait is admirably life-like and individual; it emphasizes the abbot's wide reading and marvellous memory both for literature and for facts, and the qualities which brought him equal success at court and at home in his cloister. At all times, and more especially during those two years when Suger was regent of the kingdom, and the king absent on the luckless Second Crusade, he showed a steady front against the lawless barons, and did what he could to protect the peaceful townsfolk and peasants. He was an upright judge, exceptional in his hatred of bribery; and, above all, he had the serene confident qualities of a born ruler.

He was not prone to remove his officials from their administration, except for sure and weighty reasons, and when they were plainly at fault. For he was wont to say that there was nothing less expedient or the common good than this, since the men removed carry off all that they can, and their successors, fearing the same fate, hasten to enrich themselves by robbery....He drove no man from his heritage on a first offence, unless the crimes were many and great, and unless he feared worse for the future than that which he was now punishing; or did he ever exact punishment until he had tried remedies in vain.... He punished sinners not so much because they had sinned, as in order that they might not sin (pp. 383-4).

St-Denis had possessed immense resources; but here, as in so many other cases, the steady process of time and occasional mismanagement had wrought great havoc. It is evident from the details Suger gives us in his autobiographical memoir that William does not exaggerate in claiming that he doubled the

abbey revenues. We find him fighting the barons who, from generation to generation, had encroached on its privileges and oppressed his tenants; a fight in which he was seconded by the favour of two successive kings. At another time, he raises a great sum to buy off the Jewish usurer who held a rich estate on mortgage; in other cases, Suger doubles or trebles the revenues by substituting enlightened business methods of cultivation for long-standing muddle and waste. On four of these domains, at least, he built strong granges, fortified almost as castles, where the produce might be held securely amid the surrounding disorder (pp. 160, 165, 169, 172). Thus from one of those domains, which had formerly yielded from 10 to 15 *livres* a year, he often received 100 in later years (p. 169). His energy was seconded by a dogged persistence and a belief in his own star. For the rebuilding of the abbey church—one of the great architectural achievements of that age, and one which is often taken as the first example of the Gothic style—six enormous beams were needed, and the carpenters despaired of finding such. He himself rode to the great forest of Rambouillet; and here,

summoning our foresters and others who knew the woods, we adjured them on their fealty and on oath to advise us whether we might find there, with what labour soever, beams of this bigness. They smiled, and would have derided if they had dared; for they marvelled that we should be so ignorant as not to know that none such could be found in that whole land, especially since Milo of Chevreuse, the castellan, who was our liege man, and part of whose fee was a half of the forest, having been long at war both with our sovereign lord the king and with Amaury de Montfort, had left nothing of that kind standing untouched in his need for building bartizans and bulwarks. But we, rejecting all their words, began with a certain audacity begotten of our own faith to search through the woods; and about the first hour of day we found one beam of sufficient measure. In brief, by noon or earlier, searching through thickets and through the densest woodland, we marked twelve beams (for so many were needful for us) to all men's amazement and above all to the wonder of those that were with us; and these we bore off in exultation to the holy minster and set up for the roof of our new work, to the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus, who had preserved those trees for Himself and for the holy martyrs, protecting them, according to His holy will, from the hands of ravening men (p. 221).

The incident fully bears out his biographer's remark that in many cases, when he seemed to be working only through others, the real energy came from himself (p. 400).

It is only by bearing in mind this man's character that we can realize the full cultural significance of his charter drawn up in 1125. It concerns the *mainmorte*, or heriot, which the abbey had exacted from the inhabitants of the town of St-Denis and the suburb of St-Marcel. It runs:

We will have it known not only to the present age but to future posterity that the citizens and tenants of the town of St-Denis (being grievously burdened and afflicted by the exaction of that abominable [*pessimae*] custom called *morte-main* which is proved by plain truth to have grown up from the days of Our predecessor abbot Yves [1075-94] not by due right of ancient custom but by the ambitious introduction of a novel exaction) have come into Our presence, humbly imploring us with their wishes and prayers that we should rescue them and their heirs from the yoke of this so grievous exaction and oppression. Wherefore, having taken counsel with Our brethren according to custom, we have unanimously consented to their petition; for we think it right to honour more highly and more expressly, beyond all the rest, this town of St-Denis, which holds the headship among all the possessions of the said abbey by the merit of singular privilege, and which by the presence of the most precious Martyrs stands forth with a special prerogative, which it rightly claims as its own. To all therefore in this town aforesaid, dwelling on the Saint's land or under his sway, we have released the said exactions in perpetuity, by the tenor of this deed and by the most firmly established security, on the terms that they, in consideration of the renovation and beautifying of the entrance to the abbey of St-Denis, have contributed two hundred *livres* to be spent upon that work at Our disposition and discretion.

And, a little later in the charter, he recurs to his tone of self-satisfaction: "We have seen how just it is, by the evidence of reason, that kindly consideration should remove unjust exactions from those who are afflicted and oppressed thereby."¹ These words are in one sense justified; it was exceptional to render speedy justice to the common man, when once you had him in your power, even at the price of fifty oxen; for that is the number which the tenants might have bought with their 200 *livres*. The great abbot could not quite forget, nor could his monks forget,

¹ *Œuvres*, p. 320.

that they were also great landlords; it was no easier in the twelfth century than in any other age for the rich man to pass through that needle's eye.¹

I must end as I began: this volume is less a history than materials for history; materials which have been unduly neglected in the past, but which must be taken into account in any full and truthful history of monasticism. Yet I have steadily asked myself all along: How can I and my readers keep a fairly coherent picture in view amid all this unavoidable multiplicity of details? Every historian's selection of facts and documents necessarily implies a judgement in his own mind; what, then, is the judgement to which my reading in the mass has brought me, and which, gradually crystallizing, has guided my selection of specimens from that mass? What, in short, is the point of view from which I start throughout these volumes? and all the more definitely, perhaps, in those portions where some of my critics, unfamiliar with this special field of medieval history, have suspected mere caprice because they find no display of formal academic scaffolding: because I have not found time or space to explain at every point my collocation of documents and my transitions from one to another.

I am trying at all those points to think myself and my readers back into these medieval monastic conditions. I think of men who have no more claim to real heroism or real villainy than ourselves; men embedded in a society governed nominally by clear-cut theory and legislation, but where theory is in many places modified almost out of recognition by the pressure of natural personal inclinations and of inveterate social custom. That is a conflict of forces which we should have expected *a priori*, even though no records had survived; and, as it turns

¹ Hurter (II, 257 ff.) gives portraits of three model abbots in the thirteenth century: Milo at Auxerre, Peter at Alleus, and Guibert at Gembloux. The autobiography of Guibert, abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy, has been translated by C. C. S. Bland. The following further instances of recovery from debt are worth noting: *Grestain*, p. 78; Kirchgarten in *Chron. Hirsau*. (1445), II, 412; De Rosny, p. 79; Inn. III *Reg.* vol. II, 1555-6; Richard, p. 54; Bouvie (Sens [1290]), p. 138; Gatrio, I, 469; Henry, pp. 249, 297-9, 395; *St-Huber*. (1525), p. 180; Brullée, p. 133; *Aulne* [1500], pp. 113, 114, 116; *Eiflia Sacra* I, 309, 362, 369, 735; II, 39, 43, 62; Affarosi, I, 155, 174, 202; II, 78; Wharto (Durham), p. 767; Widmore (1349), p. 91, (Westminster [1480]), p. 11; Labbe, *Nov. Bib. MSS.* I, 590; Snape, pp. 37-50, 52, 73, 147.

out, the documents themselves press it forcibly upon every careful student.

A conflict of forces; and yet, normally, a sort of equilibrium. Apart from times or places of special fervour, the monk did not always fully realize even the formal and express words of his Rule, in spite of the theory of daily reading in Chapter. And, even where he fully realized the strict words, he knew quite well that these were very liberally interpreted in practice. In my final volume we shall come to the evidence of monks who contested the legality of fifteenth-century attempts at reformation, on the plea that by taking the vows they had bound themselves not to the letter of the Rule, but only to cloister-life as it was ordinarily practised in their own day and country. Strict disciplinarians might write indignantly that all such practical modifications of the sacred theory were in no true sense *consuetudines*, but mere *corruptelae*; yet the bishop or his visiting commissaries were often compelled to admit the plea of relaxation, if only tacitly. And thus, without much stretch of conscience, a man might live in the cloister with only a little more regularity and piety than in the world. He was just what we call in our own day an ordinary decent fellow.

Try to follow the thoughts of such a man in quiet moments of reverie; of instinctive or subconscious reflection. He is past middle-age, let us say. There he sits in the cloister, where there is little talk, or in the garden, where only one other monk is directing the hired workman and pottering a little himself. The sun or the shade are just as he would wish them to be; everything conspires to give his thoughts free play over past, present and future. He looks back to his "conversion"; this may have been as impulsive and irresistible as that which sweeps a volunteer into war; but there, again, possibly followed by corresponding reactions. Yet, at any ordinary time, he is more likely to have drifted into the cloister almost as quietly as a modern officer or doctor drifts into his father's profession. In many monasteries, his noviciate would not have been much more impressive than the preparation for, or his vows than the actual ceremony of, episcopal confirmation; indeed, not so impressive as these have sometimes been under exceptional headmasters like Thomas Arnold. Thenceforward, as a full-fledged monk, he has found

the material side of life far easier than thousands have found it in "the world"; and, on the spiritual side, his advantage was palpable. Few people doubted that the cloister offered more chances of salvation than the world. In psalmody, with only ordinary decency and reverence, there is a feeling of elevation communicable even to agnostics. As for the liturgy and the sacraments, our average monk needs no unusual piety to draw very real comfort from these. The Mass is an *opus operatum*; a sacrament which sheds some of its blessings even on the inattentive beholder or listener; prayers, too, have something of the same inherent virtue. Our monk has frequently heard that the Masses and prayers of his convent are, in themselves, a purifying source for the world outside; and he sees no reason to disbelieve it. He himself is part of a chosen and privileged body, the élite of that Church which is the oldest and most imposing and most ubiquitous institution of the whole Middle Ages. He is not a religious enthusiast—that is not in his nature—but he dwells normally in religious content. On the other hand, he is not specially self-seeking or indolent; but, normally, he enjoys physical content without strenuous labour. He has inherited a set of intensely conservative traditions; within those he lives and moves and has his being; there is little to remind him that, outside, men are asking more and more insistently whether the world is now getting its money's worth out of the monk and the nun and the friar. He can always answer his conscience plausibly with "well after all, I'm no worse than my fellows"; and with our own usual consolatory afterthought "nay, perhaps a little better". He feels that he does no actual discredit to his buildings and endowments and privileges. He is proud of that minority of his Order who are really among the lights of the world; and he gives no countenance to those sinners at the other end of the scale who are reflecting disgrace on the Order. He is an average decent fellow; and, the world being as it is and apparently always has been, I cannot feel that we discredit Fountains or Tintern or any shrine of our monastic pilgrimage if we people them, in thought, with such cloisterers as this. We may wish that there had been more heroes like those Pilgrim Fathers from York who created Fountains, or those earlier pilgrims from Molesme who created Cîteaux; but it is only

human that the castles of religion which those men built should often have been garrisoned, in course of time, by an unheroic multitude, content to do little more than pass muster. No life can be contemptible in which we see our own selves reflected; our own thoughts and the things we might have done. As we linger in those ruins, and evoke the shades of their inhabitants, we may conjure up, like De Musset,

Un étranger vêtu de noir
Qui me ressemble comme un frère.



APPENDIXES

CHAPTER I

CHANCES OF HELL

FATHER Godts entitles his book "What have the Saints taught concerning the fewness of those who shall be saved?" Though the second edition is dated from Roulers, 1899, it soon became almost unprocurable and it was only after several years of search in different countries that I procured a copy through a Flemish bookseller. Yet it is a book of diligent and accurate scholarship, probably the completest ever written on this subject, and the author's evidence seems absolutely conclusive. Fr Godts, resenting what seemed to him unjustifiable relaxations introduced into the traditional teaching by his contemporary Fr Castelein and others, has appealed to all the evidence of the past: Saints, Fathers, Mission-Preachers, Theologians and Bible-commentators. He has showed that their judgement, unanimous until the Reformation and practically unanimous even then until the nineteenth century, was to the effect that the damned will outnumber the saved. Some, indeed, wrote of the majority as overwhelming; others, again, reckoned that the damned would outnumber the blessed even within the Roman Catholic fold! It was the influence of Protestantism and Rationalism—so Godts seems to prove most conclusively—which was responsible for the milder judgement which has become fashionable in our day. The first theologian, apparently, who ever dared to argue formally in favour of the blessed was a Jesuit named Gravina, who in 1762 added a chapter upon this subject to a posthumous work by Fr Piazza which he was editing. But precisely that chapter was condemned by decree of the Congregation of the Index in 1772, and the whole book was proscribed until that chapter should be expunged. A couple of generations later, it was the ex-Protestants Manning and Faber who were the main champions of the merciful doctrine, which may probably be said to have prevailed by now, but against which Fr Godts protests with all the energy of a serious and learned theologian who feels that the gravest issues are at stake. These present-day preachers of smooth things, he argues, are Modernists; men who treat the Fathers as effete, and who follow their own private judgement. What can be more dangerous (he asks) than to soften the hard truths of religion for the sake of soothing men's feelings? It is tempting to advertise "Heaven going cheap, cheap!" but it is suicidal. If the harder doctrine be true, then the preacher's more merciful, as well as more honest, course is to press that truth upon the faithful and draw the necessary conclusion: "Enter in by this narrow gate, if you would avoid an eternity of unspeakable torment." And as to its truth (he

argues) there can be no serious doubt. The milder doctrine has never yet been seriously taught in the schools; it climbs furtively into the fold; it has been bred in the brain of comparatively irresponsible theologians: for of course a Cardinal may be, on occasion, almost as irresponsible on particular theological points as anyone else.¹ Rigorism may almost be claimed as a doctrine *de fide* (pp. 213-16).

Here, then, is his own final judgement, recorded on the last page of his book.

“SUMMARY OF THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

I

Does the greater part OF THE HUMAN RACE go to perdition?

YES, answer all the Saints.

YES, answer all the old theologians and the ancient Bible-commentators.

No, answers the Rev. Fr Castelein, S.J., with Piazza (*i.e.* Gravina) and certain new-fangled writers.

The first opinion is GENERAL and CERTAIN.

2

Does the greater part OF ADULT CATHOLICS go to perdition?

YES, answer again all the Saints.

YES, answer also all theologians and commentators on Holy Scripture, anterior to the days of Protestantism.

No, answers the Rev. Fr Castelein with a few theologians subsequent to the sixteenth century and a few new-fangled writers.

The first opinion is designated by St Alfonso Liguori as THE MORE GENERAL.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

Instead of the laxer doctrine of new-fangled writers, let us preach to Christian folk:

- (1) To flee from proximate occasions of sin.
- (2) To obey some good confessor.
- (3) Continual prayer, and perpetual recourse to the Mother of God.”

¹ The case of Pope John XXII himself might be quoted in this connexion. When the king and the University of Paris rebuked him roundly for his theory of the beatific vision of God, he apologized and wrote that he was ready to be corrected even by an old woman if he could be shown to be in the wrong (Rashdall, *Universities*, I, 529ff.).

CHAPTER II

AD SUCCURRENDUM

The scene is vividly described in a deed which the monks of St-Père-de-Chartres drew up somewhere about 1050. "In the name of the holy and indivisible Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be it known unto all faithful sons of Holy Church, both present and future, as from us Robert the Prior and all the monks of St-Père, that a certain knight, Gouthard de Garancières by name, sent and besought us instantly to send him one of the brethren in all haste. When he had come and had asked what he wanted, then said this knight 'I am sore sick and like to die, wherefore I desire to be made a monk; and, that I may earn pardon for my sins, I grant and bestow upon the monastery, as an unconditional gift, from among the worldly goods which hitherto have been mine, my estate in Abbouville and that other in Imonville, in the place called Roset. And, making this donation now in the presence of many others, with the assent of my son Walter, I invoke a curse upon all who may strive to gainsay this aforesaid donation, that, unless they repent, they may pay the penalty in hell with the traitor Judas.' Having thus spoken, this said knight gave up the ghost before he could put on the frock and cowl which was being brought unto him from the monastery. Then the monk who had gone to visit him, taking his bodily vesture of clay, brought it unto our monastery, and we provided for his honourable burial among the brethren" (*Cart. St-Père*, 222). Here, again, is another of about two centuries later. "We read in the *Life of St Edmund* [Rich] that, when a certain archdeacon was sick at Merton and had fallen into despair, the Saint bade him trust in God's mercy. 'Nay,' said he, 'I cannot believe in my salvation.' Then said the Saint: 'Believe in my counsel, and I will give my soul for thine unless thou be saved, and go singing to God.' So he, comforted by the Saint's words, confessed and made his will, and, renouncing all his rents and possessions, took the habit of a canon [regular], and, as he was borne to the infirmary, he chanted that anthem *Salve Regina*, and died as the brethren joined in the chant" (*Speculum Laicorum*, ed. Welter, 29).

For the frequency of the custom see Bromyard *s.v. Divitiae* (D. ii, 8): "For we see and hear oftentimes—nay, almost daily, how rich folk, when they come to death, would rather that they had never been rich, and mourn that they ever dealt with worldly affairs. Wherefore, in token that this is their will, we sometimes see them beg then for the habit of poor mendicant friars to clothe them withal; so that then, either in their own person or through their friends, they honour those whom they have never loved, but have rather despised." Dr Owst supplies me with the following further references: *Jack Upland* [1401] Wright, *Pol. Poems*, R.S. II, 32): "many blind fools desiren to die

therein"; MS. 333 Trin. Coll. Camb. fol. 65 b, 66: "monks and other Religious who sell their habit and their prayers"; MS. Lambeth 408 (E.E.T.S. *Lay Folks' Catechism*, 82). St Anselm wrote to the countess Matilda, who hoped finally to retire to a convent: "I presume to give you this advice that, if in the meanwhile you feel (which God forbid!) that certain peril of death is imminent, you should surrender yourself wholly to God before leaving this life; and for that purpose you should have a [nun's] veil always secretly prepared in your possession" (*Epp.* iv, 37; *P.L.* CLIX, col. 221; cf. *Ep.* 41). See also Abbot Geoffrey of Vendôme in Mabillon, *Annales* (1739), vi, 190. Peter the Venerable puts the case with his usual moderation: "A certain layman came to the monastery [of Sauxillanges], under pressure of bodily sickness; and, after the common custom [*ut fieri solet*] he was clothed by the brethren with the monastic cowl, and renounced the world. Many men do thus even at their last gasp; and, albeit such men would seem surely to miss that honour which is the meed of such as come to us without the pressure of sickness, yet, if they be converted from the heart, they are certainly not excluded from the fellowship of the monks before the eyes of that Everlasting Judge. And, though it be true that to greater merits a greater reward is owed, yet that penny which was earned by those who laboured in the Lord's vineyard and from the first hour was certainly given also to such as came at the eleventh hour also. Nor doth the manner of conversion prejudice devotion of heart; nor doth God ask the cause of a man's conversion, but the manner of his conversation when once he hath been converted" (*De Miraculis*, lib. 1, c. 7; *P.L.* CLXXXIX, col. 861).

These deathbed conversions were naturally subject to changes of mind. Bishop Marbod of Rennes, in 1105, had to deal with a case where a wife had encouraged her dying husband to take the habit and the vows, yet she demanded him back again on his unexpected recovery. He decided against the lady; and indeed there was no other possibility (Mabillon, *Annales*, v, 444).

CHAPTER III

PROTECTION BY CURSES

Here is the prayer which the monks of St-Symphorien at Autun composed in the twelfth century, and registered in their cartulary for liturgical use: "In the spirit of humility and in contrition of mind, Jesus Redeemer of the world, we come before Thine altar and Thy most holy Body and Blood, and we acknowledge ourselves guilty against Thee of those our sins for which we are justly afflicted. To Thee, Lord Jesus, we come; before Thee we fall down and cry, for that the wicked and the proud and such as trust in their own might arise on every side against us. They invade the lands of St Symphorien;

they rob and lay waste; they compel Thy poor who till those lands to live in pain and hunger and nakedness; they even slay them with torments and with the sword; moreover they tear from us and bear off with violence our goods, from which we ought to live in Thy holy service, and which blessed souls have left to this monastery for their own salvation. This is Thy church, O Lord, which in ancient days thou hast founded and hast consecrated in honour of St Peter and St Symphorien; and in her sorrow there is none to console and deliver her but only Thou, our God. Arise, O Lord Jesus, to help us; strengthen us and lend us Thine aid; beat them down that fight against us, and break the pride of those that afflict this monastery and us. Thou, O Lord, knowest who they are; their names and bodies and hearts were known unto Thee from before their birth; wherefore, O Lord, do Thou judge them in Thy power as Thou knowest, and make them at Thine own pleasure to see their own misdeeds, and deliver us in Thy mercy. O Lord, despise us not who cry unto Thee; but for the glory of Thy name and for thy mercy's sake, because Thou hast founded this monastery and hast raised it to honour, visit us with peace and take us from our present anguish." *Then shall all fall on their faces and say the psalm [sic]* "Unto Thee have I lifted up mine eyes: Arise and help us: Not unto us, O Lord, etc." (*Cartulaire d'Autun*, introd. p. L). Compare this with the equally fervent, but far briefer, anathema of the Bishop of Chartres at the end of a grant to the abbey of St-Père: "If any man, however, will oppose himself against this gift of our beneficence, or if he attempt to infringe it, may he be pierced through and through with the anathema of eternal malediction, and let him have his part with those who are thrust into everlasting fire: those who said unto the Lord God *Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways*" (*Cart. St-Père*, I, 76). Other grisly forms may be found in Hurter, II, 50 n. and Hüfner, *Exemption*, 29, n. 5.

CHAPTER IV

THE REINFORCEMENT OF TESTIMONY

(Blomefield's *Norfolk*, IV, 632: Gt Massingham; cf. p. 495: Castleacre. Date about 1150: see Yvo on p. 634.)

"Jeffrey de Massingham and his brethren, Ivo, Adam, Philip, Thomas, etc., granted to [the monks of Castleacre] 40 acres of land here, and all testified and swore to it, on the holy gospel, in the chapter of the monks at Acra; and everyone of them (that this grant might be more confirmed) made an impression with their teeth on wax, that was placed on the chirograph instead of a seal; and for this grant the monks gave them 10s.—witnesses, Master Steph. de Burham, Yvo the presbyter, etc."

As to the custom of impressing memory on a child-witness by pleasure or pain, Benvenuto Cellini, in one of the early pages of his autobiography, shows how natural this was even in [1505] (ed. Sansoni (1883), 9): "When I was at the age of five years or thereabouts, my father was in a little closet of ours wherein the linen had been washed, and a good fire of oak logs was still burning. My father, with a violin at his shoulder, was playing and singing by the hearth. It was very cold; and, as he looked into the fire, it chanced that he suddenly saw a little beast like a lizard in the midst of the hottest part, disporting itself among the wildest flames. He saw at once what this was, and called for my sister and me; then, showing it to us two children, he gave me a hearty cuff; whereupon I began at once to weep. Then he pleasantly comforted me, and said: 'Dear little son, I gave thee that not for any ill that thou hadst done, but only that thou mayest remember that this lizard which thou hast seen in the fire is a salamander, such as other folk have never seen; let us take clear note thereof.' And thereupon he kissed me and gave me a few farthings."

INSUFFICIENCY OF ORAL TRADITION

Mabillon's words run: "From the mid-twelfth century onwards everything was done [by the monks] more and more in writing... even when a symbolic gift had gone before. There was a recognized necessity, to avoid quarrels in the present, and as a protection against the evil-disposed in future." And he quotes from *Nouveau Traité de Diplomatique*, v, 573 (A.D. 1202): "Since mortal life is short, and the memory of living men may fail, lest truth be hidden through the fault of human frailty, and lest deeds, hidden among men, beget occasions of contentions and quarrels, therefore it is a custom, and a just custom, that those things which are lacking in memory should endure and hold fast for ever by the help of writing." And again, *Heineccii Antiq. Goslar.* 209 (A.D. 1209): "To support them with the documents which they need against the snares of evil-minded folk in time to come." Three instances may be given from the cartulary of Molesme. One charter of donation [1100] begins as follows: "Seeing that, as St John saith, the whole world is seated in wickedness, and, at the instigation of the Devil, that enemy of all good, very many men living a secular life forget, in the heat of greed which is the root of all evil, those good things which either themselves or others do for the salvation of their souls", therefore the brethren hasten to record on parchment the generous donation which a noble lady has just made (11, 85, no. 79). Another of about the same date begins: "Because we have learned by experience that, through the carelessness of those who are unwilling to write, many gifts which have been conferred upon Holy Church by Catholic men have fallen into a sort of oblivion and departed from men's memory": therefore the monks have thought fit to record this present donation in black and white (11, 92, no. 86). In a third of the Molesme documents this takes a very interesting form; the donor gives

a written charter of his donation because "this defends the actual facts from every decay of oblivion; it neither deceives nor is deceived by any promise of gold; it speaks out and proclaims truly and fearlessly all that is committed to it" (II, 54, no. 40). Again, from a Flemish house: "Since life is brief, and perishable the memory of things that are done in time, therefore, lest they perish with time, they should be confirmed by the solemn title of written letters" (*Zwyveke*, 56; cf. a briefer formula, 19). "Writing", says another monastic charter, "is the only remedy for oblivion" (*Jully*, 262). Further references may be found in *Cartulaire d'Autun* (1865), pt. I, nos. 10, 12, 22, 32, 35, 36, 39, 42, 47; pt. II, nos. 3, 8, 19, 20, 25. *Cart. Molesme*, pt. I, nos. 9, 20, 21, 22, 23, 40, 47, 54, 64, 79, 83, 84, 86, 92, 116, 223, 233, 259. Pantin, II, 217. Richard, 10. *Jully*, 250. *Luçon*, I, 381, 386. *Abingdon*: Dugdale, I, 513; *Chron. Ab. R.S.* I, 11. *Cart. St-Trond*, I, 154. *Caunes*, 116. Labbe, *Nov. Bib. MSS.* I, 570.

THE PRESS FOR BURIAL

For further details as to the London Greyfriars, see C. L. Kingsford in *Collectanea Franciscana*, II (1922), 61 ff. In the later Middle Ages, the ordinary fee here was only 6s. 8d. On the other hand, "Edward Burnell, who was buried in the choir in 1386, left the Friars 40l.; Sir John Devereux in 1393 directed that 40 marks should be paid 'pur mon sepulture'; William Chamberleyn in 1470 left 5l. for the work of St Mary's Chapel, where he was buried; Sir John Clerk in 1481 left the Friars 4l.; and Sir John Blount in 1485 left 20l., besides a chalice and a vestment".

In the Cistercian church of la Grâce-Dieu, in Franche-Comté, there were at least seven family chapels, each devoted to the burials of some noble line (Richard, 59). In the abbey of Tulle, thirty-seven knights from one single family had their tombs. The charter confirming a gift of land to Nobiliac for the burial of a noble lady adds that "the greater part of her race was buried there" (Mabillon, *Annales*, v, 620 (an. 1116)). The monks of St-Ouen had "all the profit and emolument" of all burials within the parish which was under the shadow of their own great church (Pommeraye, 395). The abbot of Burton, in [1110], granted the estate of Acover to Orm, on this condition, that he pay us yearly 10 oras [i.e. £1. 6s. 8d. sterling], and straightway he became our man, wearing upon the four Gospels that he would keep fealty to us, and that in the matter of this land or any other or any thing whatsoever he will never harm us his whole life long, whether himself or through any other man. When he is dead, he shall cause himself to be brought to our abbey, with all his money, for burial; after which ceremony his son shall come into the chapterhouse and shall give for relief of the said land as much money as a noble man ought to give for such an estate, swearing even as his father hath sworn, and holding the land even as his father held it" (Dugdale-Caley, III, 41). The Cistercian

abbey of Walkenried in north Germany "possessed...a rich source of income in the many funerals and hereditary vaults of the neighbouring nobility; at Walkenried were graves of the counts of Vlettenberg, Lauterberg and Hohnstein, and of the barons of Werther Tettenborn, Wurm and Saltza" (Heinemann, II, 131).

At Laon, the abbey of St-Vincent attracted the bodies of the bishops away from the cathedral; this lasted down to the twenty-second abbot, in 1249 (Wyard, 451). The archbishops of Sens, down to the end of the twelfth century, seem to have been generally buried in the abbey of St-Pierre-le-Vif (Bouvier, 115, 119). The first Bishop of Durham who ventured to claim burial within a few paces of St Cuthbert's shrine, which stood in the centre of the Nine Altars in the cathedral, was Anthony Bek (1283-1311). This is recorded by the author of *The Rites of Durham* as an act of remarkable audacity; and it is consistent with what the chronicler Graystones tells of him: "he was of such magnanimity that he thought he might do whatsoever he would without rebuke from others; [at the Papal Court] he did not shrink from giving benediction in the presence of cardinals, nor from playing with hawks in the pope's presence." Again: "Except for the king, no man in the realm outdid him in pomp, in gesture, and in military power; he was busied rather with civil business than with episcopal.... Nothing was too dear for him, if so he might magnify his own glory. He once gave 40s. for 40 herrings in London, because the other great folk there assembled in parliament would not buy them by reason of their great dearness.... Yet, though he was lavish in many things, he was never in want, but lived in abundance unto his death. He ate barely enough: he lived most chastely, scarce fixing his eyes on any woman's face. Therefore, at the translation of St William of York, whereas the other bishops feared to touch the saint's bones, through remorse of conscience for lost virginity, he boldly laid his hands thereon" (*Rites of Durham*, Surtees Soc. CVII, 2; *Anglia Sacra*, I, 746, 751).

BURIALS OF WOMEN

Even the strict Cistercians, by 1325, had relaxed sufficiently to admit the burial of women in their churches, when accompanied by substantial testamentary dispositions. And in practice the relaxation had come earlier; for at least two noble ladies were buried in 1298 and 1312 at the Cistercian abbey of Escharlis (*Hist. Ill. Yonne*, 774). The difficulties consequent upon women's attendance at abbey funerals and the strict precautions to be taken, come out in Innocent IV's reforming statutes for the Premonstratensian Order (1245) (Le Paige 665). In 1316 lord Thomas of Alveton was buried at the abbey of Croxden, of which he was patron, and "the lady Elizabeth his wife after the funeral, sojourned for a month or more within the abbey" (Dugdale-Caley, v, 661).

ECONOMIC VALUE OF BURIALS

Alan, Lord of Allerdale [1170], gave three churches, with other considerable endowments, to the priory of St Bees as a "corpse-present" for his son (*Reg. St Bees*, Surtees Soc. (1915), 531). A French bishop, in 1112, gave two churches for his burial at Molesme (*Cart. Molesme*, II, 204). In 1313 the privilege of a single burial at Bordesley abbey was paid for by the gift of a rectory and many other things of value (R. S. Bartleet, *Bordesley Abbey* (1866), 74). When any bishop of Durham died, the monks always took the funeral chariot and horses, and all the other valuables employed for the ceremony (*Rites of Durham* (1903), 57). The duke of Exeter, in 1427, gave for his burial at Bury an endowment of £20 a year (*Memorials of St Edmund's*, R.S. III, 260). A Devonshire donor [1160] gave two manors for burial (*Cart. Buckland*, 182ff.). At Oseney [1210], Robert de Berners bought it for £50 down (*Reg. Oseney*, III, 50; cf. II, 562).

For the cash-nexus in this burial system see also Mabillon, *Annales*, v, 175, 179; vi, 179; *Regesten d. Erzbischöfe v. Köln*, II, 324-5; Blomefield, I, 441; Westlake, *Westminster*, 154; Westlake, *Last Days*, 70, 103; Jongelinus, lib. VII, 58-9; O.P. I, 11, 15; Heywood, *Assempri*, 207; Dutilleux-Depoin, 9; Gerson, IV, col. 439 a; Turner-Salter, 558; Luchaire, *Social Life*, 216; Buonanomi, 12; Finke, 135, § 9; Jacquin, 55; Hottinger, II, 842; Lea, *Inquisition*, I, 29-31; Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Doct.* 772; Giraldus Cambrensis, *Spec. Eccl.* 198; *Cart. Bon-Port*, 199, 216, 272, 364; Conc. Lateran. IV, §§ 56, 57; *Silvacanne*, 39, 46, 75; Gir. Camb. R.S. IV, 178; *York Memo. Book*, I, 29; *Studien und Mittheilungen*, XXI, 123; *Winchcombe Landbok*, I, 74; *Revesby Abbey*, 23, 24; *Archaeol. Journal* (Dec. 1845), 339ff.; Noake, *Monastery and Cathedral of Worcester*, 77; Finke, *Acta Concilii Constan.* § 9; Wadding, *Annales*, I, 272, IV, 163; Ehrle, "Die Spiritualen" in *A.K.L.G.* I, 297; *P.L.* XLIII, col. 858 c; *St-Hubert*, 293.

CORPSE-QUARRELS

One of the fiercest of these is told in the chronicle of the abbey of Morigny (Duchesne, *Hist. Franc. Scriptores* (1641), 367ff.). The monks' rivals for corpses were the neighbouring canons of St-Martin-Étampes. Philip I had allowed the monks to appropriate this church in 1106, and his successor Louis VI had confirmed the gift. But the twelve canons of St-Martin were a far less unresisting prey than the ordinary parish priest: so that, here, the friction, inseparable from all appropriations of churches to monasteries, blazed up into fierce quarrels and litigation. The main stumbling-block, here as in many other cases, was the question of burial-fees. The present translation omits a good deal of superfluous matter (p. 367, A.D. 1119): "At this time arose a most foul and troubled dispute [*foedissima et turbulentissima*

quaestio] between us and the canons of Étampes concerning the burial of corpses. The canons were supported by Algrin, a Clerk of the Royal Palace, and by Stephen the Chancellor, brother to Ansel the king's Seneschal and the most trusted of the royal counsellors, at whose will the kingdom was governed in those days. Both of these men were canons of Étampes, wherefore they supported the canons to the utmost of their power. These men oppressed the cause of justice and turned the king's heart." The abbot therefore gained the queen's favour and the pope's. The king in council, at the instance of the canons and of the Archbishop of Sens, protested against the letters of privilege which the pope had granted, and suspended them until the pope should be better informed. The next extract is from the abbot's reply to the archbishop's letter. "To the venerable lord, and most beloved Father in Christ, D., by God's grace Archbishop of Sens. Thomas the unworthy servant of the abbey of Morigny sendeth greeting and all due obedience. You write (I think, by way of counse and not to strike terror into us,) that King Louis was present at this pleading, who altogether favours the side of the canons and detests and disapproves of the grievous and intolerable encroachments of the monks. Hereunto we answer briefly; *first*, that it is the canons who condemn the authority of the See of Sens, in that they have recourse to a secular court, and bribe the king with money to contradict the privilege of the Church of Rome, wherein they violate Canon Law. *Secondly*, they assert with lying and impious tongue that we have partly drawn to ourselves the burials of that parish and have encroached upon its boundaries. We do none of these things. For we know how damnable an evil it is to take burial-money, being taught both by Holy Scripture and by the oppression of the poor, whom in our own neighbourhood and [not?] only in your diocese, we see weeping at the graves of their dead; but their tears flow less for the bodies than for the moneys that they have lost. Moreover, be it said with all respect, it would have been for you (if your Paternity had been so pleased) to set up a staff of defence against the barkings of those who look upon all that is given us by the faithful as a loss to themselves. What, finally, shall I say of the king? By the precept of the First Pastor I have learned to fear God and honour the king. But by what sort of counsels he is often times led astray you, who are the chief of an ecclesiastical province have learned sometimes by experience. But, to speak briefly, let those dread the king who are choked with riches and delights, or who are burdened with ecclesiastical honours for the profit of their fellow-men. We are Christ's poor folk; it is a common proverb, my Lord, that a naked man cannot be stripped. No man feareth to lose that which he desireth to quit of his own free will; and, to speak the plain truth, I am ready rather to die than to do aught against the [Papal] Privilege. Abbot Thomas's firm attitude made its impression; he went to the pope again, and "multiplied his prayers to the king and the queen until he had obtained confirmation of the all-important Privilege. "What more? no man can count the joy that was poured into the

bosom of our monks and of all our friends; for God had arisen and His enemies were scattered. Algrinus was as a man thunderstruck; all our enviers and haters were dispersed as smoke from before the face of God." But no man familiar with medieval litigation would expect the matter to end here. The canons procured a revision of judgement, and elicited a letter from the abbot to the papal chancellor which, here again, I abridge (p. 370): "To Chrysogonus, Cardinal Deacon and Bibliothecarius of the Holy Roman Church of God, Thomas Abbot of Morigny sendeth greeting. The canons in our neighbourhood, (if indeed those men can be called Canonical who buy and sell doves in God's temple, who make their sons heirs of their prebends, who violently demand a price for baptism, and burial-fees for the dead,)¹ crept stealthily away from judgement while you were in these parts, and at your departure took refuge in the succour of certain folk who are sharers of their revenues and their misdeeds in the Church. These canons, then, chattering now of the [Royal] Privilege that they have obtained against our [Papal] Privilege (a thing ignominious to our Lord the Pope and to the Holy Roman Church), have become more wicked than before. For, against the manner of this country, against the custom of all the churches, against law, against the church canons, against God, they demand still heavier burial-fees, and forbid all others who would fain be buried elsewhere for the good of their souls. No tongue can say how great tumult ariseth hence among the people; how bitter complaint among the nobles; what revilings and malefactions. This scandal hath already sown the seed of many man-ughters. Wherefore I beseech your Excellency to succour the souls for whom Christ died, lest the Prince of Darkness and the Thief by night find, through your action, an occasion for stealing them away. For, in order that they might be helped by the prayers of men that live holy lives according to the Rule, not only the bodies of the men of rampes but those of their friends also were customably carried away to be freely buried not only in our monastery but in others also, both these days and before our monastery was founded; the justice hereof is proved by reason, confirmed by authority and proclaimed by custom. For (to omit those citations which, as I have noted, you have before you in this matter) hear now the words of the blessed Augustine, writing to Paulinus Bishop of Nola in his book *Concerning the Care for the Dead*, and saying 'If a cup, or a garment, or a ring, or anything of that sort, be more dear to posterity in proportion to their love for their parents, then must we in no wise contemn bodies, which we wear far more familiarly and more closely than any garment. And, if this be true, then also it is a mark of good human affection towards

The prohibition of demanding fees for the sacraments and necessary ministrations of the church, though it appears very early in the records of church synods and was repeated with wearisome frequency, was never thoroughly enforced. When our abbot pleads "the custom of all churches", he is citing not the practice of many other parishes, but simply the theory of all parochial life.

our dead friends to bury their bodies hard by the Memorials of the Saints;¹ for, if there be some religion in burying them at all, it is impossible that there should be no religion in taking thought where they should be buried.² Care therefore for the salvation of your own soul, and see that the bearer of this letter have an opportunity for speaking, and suggest to our Lord [the Pope] that he provide a remedy for this horrible and abominable evil. Let him have pity on those souls who have prayed for succour and can get none. Let him have pity on this poor Church [of ours] which he himself dedicated with his own hand, and for the oppression whereof—nay, even for its destruction—the Devil hath wrought such machinations. Farewell.”

This produced some effect, though (p. 371) “Satan still strove to annul our successes, and to besiege the Tower of David which was built over against Damascus”. The monks seem rightly to have claimed the general sympathies of the population; for two great lords left them handsome legacies, “and, for the second time, a confraternity of men and women was formed at Étampes, by whom all the glass windows in our church, and the wooden bridge over the stream, were finished”. Changes at the royal court, amid many fluctuations, seemed at last favourable, and finally a friendly noble secured a favourable answer even from the king (p. 373): “But the Devil, enemy of the human race and instigator of all evil, came by night and sowed the foul tares of discord, and (God’s providence permitting) had wellnigh choked whatsoever the Lord, by day, had sowed of monastic wheat. For the canons, being unable to expel the monks by force, strove to do so by subtle machinations. The king was at Reims, that most noble mother-church of all France, where he caused his firstborn Philip to be anointed and crowned as his coadjutor; and Thomas our abbot with Bartholomew, Prior of St Martin’s, was present at that noble gathering. Then the man who was chief standard-bearer of hate against us, one Hugh, Priest and Precentor of their church, seized this occasion of treachery and, with certain of his accomplices, laid snares which are horrible to relate. Him the canons bribed with money and with the promise of a prebend in case the monks could thus be cast forth, and brought him by stealth into the church, while they themselves lay hid in the charnel-house, wherein the bones of the dead were laid without the church precincts. Then, rushing forth from their hiding-places they laid hands on a monk talking alone with a boy, as had been his

¹ From a very early date the relics of saints were put under the Christian altar.

² The good abbot perhaps reckoned on the Chancellor’s not verifying his quotation; for St Augustine continues straight on: “But while it is desirable that there should be such like solaces of survivors, for the showing forth of their pious mind towards their beloved, I do not see what help they be to the dead save in this way: that upon recollection of the place in which a deposited the bodies of those whom they love, they should by prayer commend them to those same saints, who have as patrons taken them into their charge to aid them before the Lord. Which indeed they would be still able to do even though they were not able to inter them in such places.”

frequent wont (for he was old, foolish, and dissolute), as though he were committing that crime. Wherefore these men, so corrupt of mind that they seemed even mad, banished all respect of humanity and stripped that monk straightway of his garments, rushed to the church bells, and called the people together, among whom they spread this intolerable accusation, crying out with lying tongue that all the other monks were as this one, and setting all things in disorder. The people, smitten by the novelty of this unheard-of crime, were turned to fury; they invaded the monks' lodging with wild cries, seeking to break it open, some with staves and some with stones, and to slay the monks herein. Yet, while the monks wept within and cried aloud unto God, Christ awoke from sleep and snatched our sinking ship from the waves; or certain knights of the town were moved with compassion and repelled the furious assaults of the people. It chanced also that Henry, Archbishop of Sens, passed through Old Étampes the week following. Our adversaries, therefore, diligently spied out his coming, and ordered in various places throngs of the vulgar and of their harlots. When the archbishop came into the town, there arose a confused clamour that reached the ears even of those who loved us least, crying upon him to cast forth these foul unchaste monks, and to restore the church to the canons. Already they seemed victorious; and trusting in that succour¹ which we had hoped would be faithful to us over all, they sought to bribe the king and his court to fulfil their desires. At last the day of leading was fixed at Poissy in the king's presence, between us and the canons. The matter seemed unbearable to the Abbot and the brethren, by reason both of our poverty and of this evil report. But that Physician who is not only potent but Omnipotent, who can turn venom into an antidote and make good even from evil, caught these wise men in their cunning (for they fell into the pit that they themselves had digged), stripped them utterly of their vain hopes, and freed us from our tribulations. For our Abbot had, long since, bound the archbishop to ourselves by many benefits; so that, even as he passed through Old Étampes, he loathed the errors and clamours of the various multitude, and scarce abstained from launching instant excommunication against them. [Several other able prelates, Abbot Roger of St-Denis among them, came to this Council of Poissy, and] after we came to the light of judgement, this impious treachery began to wax pale; and, in resisting the authority of Canon Law, it would even have incurred corporal penalties. But these men (I mean, the canons) were cast into prison and compelled to sue humbly for the succour of our Abbot, whose ruin they had even now so securely threatened. The king, in wrath, cited the burgesses and all the townsfolk of Old Étampes to his judgement-seat at Paris, hoping thus to press much money from them. On this account a vast and intolerable outcry arose; the townsfolk cursed and loathed the Abbot, saying that they would all be burnt, when they came back from the king, by our Abbot, who was indeed a man of resource and who was suffering this travail

¹ It seems necessary to read *confisi* here for *confusi*.

on their behalf!" The good monk owns that the whole story is too long to tell in full. The sequel is briefly summed up by Mabillon (*Annales*, v, 491): "At last the Archbishop Daimbert and the canons gave their assent to the king's gift, and the church [of St Martin] was reduced to the position of a conventual cell." In other words, the monks took the place of the canons, and thenceforward the clergy serving the church were simply vicars instituted and paid by the monks.

The subject is so important that I must here add a few more concrete cases. In 1206, Innocent III judged a case in which the Prior of Montferrand accused the neighbouring Hospitallers of having illegally taken the burial-perquisites accruing from six corpses of the prior's "parishioners"—i.e. rich folk who were parishioners of some church which the priory had appropriated—by which embezzlement of corpse the priory had lost more than 250 *l.* Innocent decreed that the Hospitallers should restore a fourth part of this 250 *l.* to the prior, and should also disgorge the whole of what they had received for three funerals if, as was asserted, these had been illegally attracted to the Hospitallers' church (*P.L.* ccxv, col. 903). Innocent IV, in 1254 directed to Bishop Otto of Passau a bull rehearsing the complaints of the Cathedral Chapter of Passau against the Friars: "When any man falls to his sick bed, the aforesaid Religious flock together, and often anticipating the sick man's invitation, visit him under pretext of piety and compose and order his testament, finally appointing it to their master alone, if they are found to be executors of the said testament. What more shall I say? The sick man, enticed by their fair words deserts the burial-place of his father and grandfather and chooses to be buried among these, lavishing ample legacies upon them, but little or none to the churches aforesaid." The pope's belief in the seriousness of these charges is shown by the precautions which the bull goes on to prescribe against such practices (Finke, *Dominikanerbriege*, 77, with the emendation of *speciem* for *spem*. For similar quarrels see pp. 312-112-13, 115, 155). Yet in 1348, a few weeks before the Black Death we find the Synod of Dublin actually calling upon lay help in the matter. The decree rehearses how, in spite of official prohibitions and in defiance of the pains of excommunication therein rehearsed, certain folk still tout illegally for burials: therefore let parish priests proclaim periodically from their pulpits that any such case must be reported to them by the congregation (Wilkins, *Concilia*, II, 747, § 4). In 1274 there was "a suit between the Prior and Convent of Seleburne against Sir Philip, rector of Gretham, in which the convent claim an annual pension of 2s. from the church of Gretham which the said Philip had withheld. . . the convent thereupon further claim that the body of Joan called le Foke, buried at Gretham, be dug up, and her body or bones with the offerings and obventions be restored to them; . . The Judge decrees that the said annual pension be restored, with the arrears, to the said Philip; . . that the said Philip be discharged from exhuming the body of the said Joan or returning oblations" (Macray, *Selborne*, 65

How profitable these burial-fees sometimes were, and how desperately they might be fought for, transpires from a very curious case at Cologne in 1341-4. This came at the end of a century of struggle; pages might be filled with the records of papal bulls and conciliar decrees attempting to settle this contest for burial-fees between the friars and the parish clergy; the popes nearly always favoured the friars, who certainly had the balance of goodness and usefulness on their side. But the rector of St Columba's, in which parish the Franciscans of Cologne had that convent in which they had recently buried their own great brother Duns Scotus (1308), was provoked in 1341 to show serious fight; he took his suit before the pope. From the recorded pleadings we should judge that he had the law on his side; both parties agreed to abide by an arbitral decision from Rome; it was given against the friars, and they repudiated it on the plea of prejudice. Another arbiter was appointed, domestic chaplain to the pope and *auditor sacri palatii*; he again decided against the friars, who again rebelled. This time the pope was in earnest, and laid them under an interdict. After many negotiations, and another judicial enquiry which must have cost a good deal of money, the friars were freed from their interdict on condition of a public humiliation and the payment of the enormous sum of 900 gulden to the Rector of St Columba's (Braun, 78-85; cf. 25). A rich tenant of the Abbot of Burton swears, on entering into his tenancy, that he will pay a yearly rent of 20 ore, and that his dead body shall be brought to the abbey "with all his money, for burial; after which burial, his son shall come into our chapterhouse and give for relief as much money as a noble man ought to give for such lands" (Dugdale-Caley, III, 41 a). The "*Commoditates ex sepulturis provenientes*", with the accessory "*oblaciones cereorum pecuniarum equorum armorum aut aliorum mortuorum...necnon alia jura funeralia*", form the subject of an elaborate indenture between the monks of Dunfermline and the citizens of Perth in 1440 (*Reg. Dunferm.* 296). At Meaux (Yorks) "The only considerable litigation under Abbot Hugh was with the nuns of Swine, and from a characteristic cause. They had carried off by force the corpse of Amandus Stewart, who had bequeathed it, with the usual accompanying gift of a piece of land, to Meaux abbey, and had buried it in their own cemetery; of course with a view to securing the land that was to go with it. They had also committed trespass on the abbey property. Out of these irregularities a long quarrel sprang up between the houses, which was eventually adjusted by a composition. The nuns, however, retained the contested body" (*Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, R.S. I, xxxix). At Strassburg there was a long-standing quarrel between the four Orders of friars and the secular clergy concerning offerings, and especially burial-fees. In 1454 the friars brought the following accusation: "when persons die, who have chosen their burial-place not in their own parish churches but in other consecrated places, be they monasteries or churches, and when men would bury them there after their death, then the parsons or parish priests come to the spot and forbid the removal

of the corpse from the house and its burial, under pain of excommunication, until the dead man's heirs or friends have paid a certain sum of money called 'The Last Farewell', or *Ultimum Vale*—10 or 20 or 30 or 40 or 50 florins, more or less, according to the valuation of the heritage. And these parsons have so strictly demanded and required, even from the very poorest folk, this valuation or blackmailing, in addition to the *portio canonica* or *Lippel-recht* which falls to them in such cases in virtue of Church law, that oftentimes many days must pass until they have begged the money from door to door; and meanwhile the corpse remains unburied until it is half rotten and corrupt." They begged the city council to compel the priests to content themselves with "the time-honoured 50 Pfennige". Both the council and the friars sent deputations to Calixtus III, who appointed a commission of three to go into the matter. The business finally fell upon one alone of the three, a bishop, who heard the parties, and finally decided that the priests must content themselves with their *portio canonica*, and that the *Ultimum Vale* and exactions for communion or other sacraments were illegal. These were therefore prohibited thenceforward under pain of excommunication. The parsons, however, banded together, and won the Bishop of Strassburg to their side, and appealed against the sentence. The city was then given over to a regular pulpit-war, each side preaching against the other. The priests succeeded in getting a fresh papal commission appointed, with the Bishop of Bâle as chairman. The council, with great difficulty, procured from the Roman Court a reversal of this decree and a confirmation of the first. Even so, however, the priests made another attempt in May 1457; but the pope rejected this, and thus settled a quarrel of at least six years' standing (Schilter's addition to J. Königshofen, *Chronicon* (1698), 1128ff.).

USURY AND BURIAL

So widely (writes Ubertino da Casale) had the abuse spread of admitting usurers to burial in Franciscan churches without requiring that they should repent and restore their ill-gotten gains, that the city authorities of Siena wrote formally to the pope, protesting against these relaxed friars, "who absolved usurers and received them for burial, though there were no signs of restitution of their ill-gotten gains" and who persecuted that small minority of strict Franciscans "from whom alone [the citizens] learned the gravity of this crime of usury" (*A.L.K.G.* III, 107; cf. 68). Hurter (II, 29) puts this with characteristic benevolence: "Men were glad to [give endowments to the monks] in order to procure Christian burial for an excommunicated person". But the Franciscan Nicole Bozon [1320] complains "nowadays the old fashion is changed; for those who once avoided to give such [usurers] the kiss of peace in church, are now ready to kiss their feet. . . and they whose bodies were wont to be buried in the field or the garden are now entombed in churches before the high altar" (ed. Toulmin Smith, 35).

DISMEMBERMENT OF CORPSES

"The monks of Fossa Nuova, as is written in the *Legenda* of St Thomas, separated his head from the body, in order that they might thus place so great relics in divers places and consequently keep them better; and, if the body were taken from them, they might at least keep either head or body in their own possession (*sic*). And it is held as probable and almost firmly believed by many folk that the said monks caused the Blessed Thomas's corpse to be boiled, and this for three reasons. First, because the monks were sore afraid lest the aforesaid sacred body should be torn from them against their will by the Friars Preachers, and especially in the days of pope Benedict XI, who had been a Friar Preacher. Wherefore, seeing that the said Saint, in his human form, had been of very great stature, whereby he earned in life the name of The Great Ox of Sicily, therefore in order that they might more easily and more often move him from place to place, and thus keep it ever with them, they caused the said body to be boiled and thenceforward to be kept in a small space. The second reason is, that at the translation of the said Saint's body after his canonization [1323], whereof we read in the *Legenda*, the said body was whole and altogether incorrupt; and, at that time, the abbot and convent of Fossa Nuova had removed his whole right hand at the supplication of the countess, the Saint's sister, and given it to her as a precious relic. And, whereas the said hand remaineth in the convent of the Friars Preachers at Salerno in the same fleshly integrity, and without any corruption, wherein it was at that translation, therefore we may suppose in probability, and firmly believe, that after like manner the whole of that said body would have remained whole and incorrupt even to the present time, if it had not at some time been boiled. The third reason is, that now the bones of the Blessed Thomas's sacred body are as it were of a ruddy colour, and seem to have been violently separated from the flesh by the force of fire, either through boiling or through some other fiery change" (*AA. SS. Bolland. Mart. VII* (ed. 1668), 725. The narrator is brother Raymundus Hugonis of Toulouse, who had heard the details from Philippus de Theate, D.D., prior of the Dominican province in Sicily). The vault at Fontevraud in which Henry II of England was laid "took the name of *Royal Cemetery*. There, in later days, his son, Richard Cœur-de-Lion, was laid by his side, and his wife Eleanor of Guienne, who took the veil there after his death; John Lackland's heart was laid in a golden cup at his feet" (*Fontevault*, 32). John, in fact, was buried in three different places. When he died at Newark, and his body was taken to Worcester Cathedral, it was disembowelled "for more decent transportation" by his physician, the Abbot of Croxden. The Abbot "sprinkled these viscera copiously with salt and carried them off for honourable burial at Croxden": the king had left to that abbey, on his deathbed, land to the value of £10 a year (*Matthew Paris, Chron. Majora*, an. 1216

ad fin.). His brother Richard was romantic in his burial as in his life. When he felt his end approaching, "then" (writes the monastic annalist) "the king commanded that his brain and blood and bowels should be buried at Charron and his heart at Rouen and his body at Fontevraud, at the feet of his father". Matthew Paris and Matthew of Westminster add that Richard, under seal of secrecy, explained this distribution to certain of his familiars: the body, at the feet of a father whom he confessed to have betrayed; the heart to Rouen, for its incomparable loyalty to him; and the offal to these Poitevins who had betrayed him (*Annales de Burton*, R.S. 197; M. Paris, *Chron. Majora*, R.S. II, 452; compare Oxenedes, R.S. 96). It was to Fontevraud, again, that Henry III promised his heart; and, in 1292, the Abbot of Westminster solemnly delivered it to that abbey, under warrant from Edward I (Widmore, 79). This was the last connexion of the Plantagenets with their ancestral burial-place.

Two picturesque Continental cases may be quoted. When King Ottokar of Bohemia was killed at the Marchfeld in 1274, "his bowels were taken out and the rest of his body, salted, was laid in the convent of the Franciscans. For he died under papal excommunication; therefore he could not be buried in a cemetery" (*Ann. Colmar*, 292). The Empress of Germany, Rudolf of Habsburg's consort, "chose for her burial-place the cathedral of Bâle.... Her bowels were removed and her stomach was filled with sand and ashes. Then her face was anointed with balsam, and her whole body wrapped in waxed linen, and dressed in precious silken garments. Her head was attired in white silk, and crowned with a golden crown.... Thus she was borne to Bâle with forty horsemen and, as is believed, with great wealth of money" (1281) (*Ann. Colmar*, 294). Mr Bradford's index shows sixteen cases of heart-burial at Westminster Abbey between 1189 and 1509, and twenty-four among the four Orders of friars in London. Wharton's *Anglia Sacra* records cases at Ely in 1197, 1256, and 1443; Winchester, 1261; Durham, 1274 (I, 493, 633, 636, 671, 743). As to Boniface VIII's bull, Mr Bradford writes (p. 47): "The prohibition was, however, modified by Benedict XI (1303-1304) in favour of King Philip le Bel in relation to members of his family, where it might be difficult to transport the whole body to the place of sepulture. But the custom continued in spite of the bull, and it appears that Pope John XXII (1313-1334) and his successors made capital out of the Edict by the large sums of money obtained for the grant of Indults (licences) permitting the division of the body. Some instances may usefully be cited: In 1317—To John called Brabanzon (*sic*) of the Diocese of Lincoln, who had incurred excommunication for having divided his father's corpse and buried it in divers places—absolution and dispensation. In 1323—To Queen Isabella—that her body may be divided and buried in three churches of her choice. In 1323—To the Bishop of Paris to absolve Gaucher de Chatillon, excommunicated for having divided the body of his son, etc. In 1329—To Thomas Ranulph, Earl of Moray, that his heart may be divided from his body



GRAVESTONES AT HULTON

Note the mason's tomb (middle top) with hammer, square, and rule

and separately buried. In 1329—To Mahaut, Countess of Artois, for her body to be divided and her heart buried near the tomb of her son. In 1331—To the Bishop of Moray and others—granting absolution for the separation of Bruce's heart from his body and sending it against the Saracens. In 1342—To Joan of Valois—for the division of her body. In 1345—To Queen Isabella—to the same effect as in 1323. In 1352—To Mary de Sancto Paulo, Countess of Pembroke—to have her heart removed after death and buried in a place separate from her body. The Bishops' Registers of this period further illustrate the papal reprobation of the practice. In that of John de Drokenesford, Bishop of Wells, under date 1314, March 28, is recorded the 'discharge of a sentence of excommunication passed on Sir John de Merriet for the removal of the heart from the corpse of his deceased wife, when a penance was enjoined for the same by order of Berengarius, Bishop of Tusculum, the Pope's Penitentiary, and it was further directed that the heart should be interred with the body from which it had been taken.'"

MEDIEVAL VANDALISM

(*Journ. Brit. Arch. Association*, xli, 68).

"It is a curious fact that all these memorial slabs were found in the bottom of the drain which served the kitchen of the Abbey, and they formed the floor of that drain. One can hardly conceive that the monks would lay hands on the grave-stones of their departed brethren, and apply them to a purpose of this sort; but it is clear that this drain came from their kitchen, and it is hardly to be supposed that the kitchen was in use after the dissolution. Memorial slabs have often been found in foundations and in walls, but this is the first time I have seen or heard of them being put at the bottom of a kitchen drain. I wish someone would suggest a less offensive interpretation of this fact; but it will not do simply to call the drain a modern one."

GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE BURIAL SYSTEM

Schreiber, in his very valuable *Kurie und Kloster*, treats this whole subject briefly, but very thoroughly (II, 105 ff.). He traces the growth of the system, the dignity which it gave to a monastery, which was thus enabled to override, before the eyes of the parishioners, even the formidable privileges of the parish priest; and the extent to which it enabled the monks to attract endowments from the nobles and richer folk. He quotes an extreme case where one single charter records the burials at Tulle of thirty-seven knights from one family, "and of their wives and children" (p. 108). The parsons and bishops naturally resented this; and, at Marseilles, the bishop is reported to have told his priests to refuse the Eucharist to all who would not swear an oath, or give a pledge, that they would on no account procure burial in the abbey of St-Victor (p. 110). The bishops frequently complained to Rome against the military Orders, as the worst trespassers upon the

ancient parochial customs (p. 118), and therefore upon the parsons' income, in which burial-fees were a steady item (p. 119). Moreover, apart from this natural resistance from the secular clergy, the monasteries were often brought into conflict with heirs who refused to honour the dead man's promise of money or lands; this Schreiber attributes not merely to malice, but to "the German feeling of justice, as against foreign and intrusive conceptions of law"—*i.e.* the Roman Canon Law (p. 130). Another fruitful cause of quarrel was the *ad succurrendum* custom (pp. 132 ff.); Schneider quotes a series of cases where advantage was thus taken of the sick man's helplessness to secure his body and his money. And, ending as his whole book does with the last years of the twelfth century, he very truly adds one final sentence: "But all these quarrels were only a prelude to more serious conflicts in the age of the Mendicant Friars." Again, he writes (p. 107): "The papal grant of the burial-privilege was of almost inestimable importance to the monasteries, both for their ideal and for their material interests. It legitimated the acceptance of any corpse, far beyond the limits of the cloistered community, and it trespassed upon parochial rights; thus the monastery was raised high in the eyes of the faithful, as a power, which could break through even the strict discipline of the parish priest. . . . Thus the monasteries gained not only moral but also economic advantages. The privilege of burial brought with it a mass of legacies, anniversaries, and other endowments." And he adds in a note: "See, for instance, the gigantic hereditary burial in the charter given to Tulle (Corrèze): 'the burial of the knights of Gimel' (here follow thirty-seven names) 'and of their wives and children' (Migne, CLXXXVIII, 1369)." He quotes four other cases in which the charters lay emphasis on the noble family of the corpses. Here, again, is the verdict of an orthodox and sympathetic monograph: "So many quarrels between the secular and regular clergy were kindled [in the Middle Ages] concerning the rights of burial, that it seems worth while to enter here into their causes, in order that posterity may have some light on this subject. The quarrels would not have blazed forth so hotly, if men had been mindful of the rule. . . . that no price should be exacted for the place of corruption or burial. When ordinary folk first began to be buried in churches, then the most sordid defilements of avarice came to light" (Thomas, 246 ff.).

CHAPTER V

MASSSES NEGLECTED

Here is the courteous Oxford protest referred to in my text. "In your lecture of Thursday, October 30th, on Monastic Finances, speaking of foundation-Masses for departed benefactors of monasteries and friaries, you said: 'The number of *unfulfilled* Mass contracts *must* have been *enormous*.' As two Catholic priests in your audience who

are naturally jealous of the honour of our profession and of the reputation of our brethren, *even if they have been dead for centuries*, we would ask you to state clearly the *documentary* evidence for your assertion.

The statement as it stands is no question of your disbelief in the dogmas of either the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or of Purgatory, a discussion of which we do not propose to engage in, but of publicly charging a large body of men with a peculiarly mean and fraudulent act of dishonesty, *i.e.* of robbing dead men of a contractual right which they had no means of enforcing—and by the association of this fraud with the highest act of religion, the Holy Mass, of thereby adding sacrilege to robbery.

We would ask for a statement of evidence on the point at the lecture on November 13th."

At my next lecture, I duly announced the discussion, and thirty or forty auditors remained to hear it. One of the two signatories examined my evidence carefully; and, after about twenty minutes, he seemed quite convinced.

His doubts were so natural, however, and the subject is so important, that I subjoin further evidence for which I had no room in my text.

The Worms visitation of 1496 may be found in *Zeitsch. Gesch. d. Oberrheins*, xxvii (Karlsruhe, 1875). Ordinary cases of Mass-neglect are recorded at Pfeddersheim (p. 244), Criesheim (p. 278, two dropped every week), Geroltzheim (p. 312, two weekly Masses due "but he very rarely or scarcely ever says them"), Weisheim (p. 313, "ten Masses are neglected at the altar of St Nicholas"), Lampertheim (p. 386, many [*plures*] Masses neglected), Grünbach (p. 412, "the Masses founded here are not said"), Daisbach (p. 418, "the poor folk complain of the chaplain, that he scarcely ever (*rarissime*) celebrates"). Monastic cases are as follows: Dienheim (p. 254), "they ought to say there two Masses a week, for which the endowment is sufficient, but the said monks scarce say one Mass there. This same chapel should have a perpetual light, but now there is none; it is seldom closed, and therefore beasts come in and defile the place." Osthoffen (p. 263), the Hospitallers are responsible for three Masses a week, but none are celebrated. The brethren of Honingen omit Masses at Ludenheim, numbers unspecified (p. 289). Chapel of Enkenbach (p. 316), "the poor folk founded this, as I was informed, but they are defrauded of Divine service. The monks enjoy the endowments [*gaudent de proventus*] and omit the duties for which they were instituted." Schriesheim (p. 393, under patronage of the abbey of Schönaue), "the chief chaplain does not say the Masses founded for his benefice: the altar-priest of St Catharine seldom celebrates." Moreover, apart from such direct testimony, the evidence for non-residence among these parish clergy (many of them monastically appointed vicars) is very suggestive. So, also, is the visitation of Lausanne diocese in 1416-17 (*Soc. Hist. Suisse Romande. Mém. et Doc. série II*, vol. XI, 1921). So, again, is the Oxfordshire visitation of 1520, where out of 193 parishes fifty-eight

had non-resident incumbents, and the evidence in fifteen cases shows that the priest in charge was more or less neglecting his services (Oxfordshire Archaeol. Soc. 1925). None of these yields direct evidence for monastic responsibility for neglect of Masses; but they help to make us understand the direct monastic testimony. In 1393, John Denys founded a chantry at Ickham by archiepiscopal licence. The preamble to his statutes gives his reasons for this foundation: "Seeing that, in these days of ours, God's worship is rather diminished than increased, and the souls of the dead are very often [*quamtociens*] given over to oblivion, and the devotions of living men are more than ordinarily withdrawn."

Archbishop Corbridge's register, under the year 1303, records how about thirty-five years ago, a certain Gilbert of Brinsley covenanted with the prior and convent of Felley that they should send one of their canons to celebrate divine service at the chapel of Brinsley on Sundays, Wednesdays, Fridays and holy days for ever; "concerning which perpetual celebration they gave unto the said Gilbert their deed of obligation: for which obligation the said Gilbert gave to the prior and convent only 11 marks [which would buy a rent of about 12s. 3d. a year]; but he promised to give them lands and possessions sufficient to maintain the said chantry for ever: under which promise they began to celebrate there for six years and more. But, when the said Gilbert died without fulfilling his promise, the said prior and convent ceased all further celebrations." Gilbert's son begged Archbishop Wykwan to compel the convent to celebrate again: but he, "finding how they had been deceived, and had received so little money from him, and how the monastery would suffer perpetual loss, denounced the said chapel as suspended, and so it hath remained suspended unto this day". The prior and convent pray that it may remain suspended (*Reg. Corbridge*, I, 265). For further evidence, see *Anal. Montserratensis*, v (1922), 263, 271; Bulliot, 255, 285; *Aurillac*, II, 487; Addy, *Beauchief*, 92; *Scottish Abbeys*, 148; Trevelyan's *Wycliffe*, 1st ed. 83; *C.P.L.* IV, 519; Blanchot, 165; *Eiflia*, II, 183; *Lyre*, 199; *Nécrologe de St-Jean (St-Bavon) à Gand*, 8, 11.

* MASSES HANDED OVER TO SECULAR PRIESTS

In 1368, Sir John Beauchamp, brother of the Earl of Warwick, bequeathed his manor of Easole to pay for a daily Mass to be said in perpetuity for his soul. It is evident, however, that the keep of a monk at Canterbury was reckoned at more than the income of this manor; for the Prior of Christ Church answered the Earl of Warwick as follows: "Most honoured Lord. We have received your letters, by which you have offered to give us the manor of Easole, after the last will of our late much honoured friend Sir John de Beauchamp, your uncle, upon the condition, as you have written to us, that we shall be bound to assign and depute specially one of our monks to sing per-

petual Masses, at the Altar of Our Lady in the Crypt, wearing vestments decorated with the arms of Warwick, for the souls of the said Sir John and of your ancestors. Hereupon, Sire, please to understand that, as we are aware, our loss cannot in any way purchase advantage for the aforesaid souls; understanding truly, that to bear and perform such a charge for so small a repayment, where there is scarcely any profit, would be too burdensome for us; wherefore, Sire, be pleased in this case to have us excused. And may God grant to you so to act that it may be to His praise and the solace of the aforesaid souls; and may he also confer upon you honour and good health for a long continuance." The earl was thus left (in his own words) "to arrange as shall seem best in some other manner for the benefit of the above-named souls". It is relevant to note that when the Black Prince, in 1362, founded a double Mass of this kind for his soul in the cathedral, the work was done by two secular priests who received board and lodging in the monastery, and £16. 6s. 8d. each in money (*Lit. Cant.* II, 428, 489; cf. 493). In 1365 we find Archbishop Sudbury complaining: "It is difficult in these days to find an honest priest who would burden himself with such continual residence and daily celebrations for a salary of £6. 13s. 4d." (*Ibid.* III). The brethren of St-Paul at Besançon had, by 1504, practically ceased to lead a community-life: "hence, numerous irregularities in the choir and in the celebration of Masses". Therefore it was decreed "that the brother charged to say a Mass should say it on that same day, or at latest on the morrow; in case of omission, it should be said immediately at his expense" (Marquiset, 153). But the abbey went on from bad to worse. At Pontoise, in 1490, the prior of St-Martin was responsible for a daily Mass in the parish church, which had been dropped ever since he had exchanged his benefice and gone to Montdidier. The abbots gradually made a permanent arrangement by which they paid a secular priest to say these Masses (Depoin, 129). To these may be added two cases from the Papal Registers, v, 585 (1402): "To the prior of Angleseye in the diocese of Ely. Mandate at the petition of the master and scholars of the college or house of St Michael, Cambridge—containing that formerly the late John Ilbergh *alias* Horwode, then rector of All Saints Ikelingham, in the diocese of Norwich, instituted in the said college two scholars to study, and one chaplain to celebrate Masses of the Blessed Virgin, assigning certain yearly rents for their sustentation; and adding that the said rents, through the malice of the times, afterwards became so diminished that such scholars and chaplain could not and cannot be sustained therewith, wherefore for some time past there has been and is no such chaplain, nor are the said fruits likely to increase—if the facts be so, to grant that they shall not be bound in future to keep such chaplain, and to cause the portion of fruits concerning him to be applied to the use of the said two scholars. If the above be carried out there shall be, especially in each Mass of the Blessed Virgin celebrated by the college, a special commemoration of the said John by a collect for the welfare of his soul." v, 519 (1402):

"To Roger Melles, perpetual vicar in the church of Wells. Indult to him—who holds also a chantry in the chapel of St Mary the Virgin in the cemetery of the church of Wollavyngton in the diocese of Wells, both without cure, and who is bound by oath to say in the said chapel the *Placebo* and *Dirige*, the canonical hours, and other prayers and commendations for the souls of its founders and other faithful departed—to say such hours, prayers and commendations in the said church of Wells or elsewhere, to take the fruits etc. of the said chantry as if he resided in the said chapel, and not to be bound to say the said hours etc. there, nor to reside." Further evidence may be found in my *Scottish Abbeys*, 155; Bulliot, pp. 54, 234, 255, 265; F. Devon Brantingham, p. xxviii; *Rites of Durham*, 44, cf. 92; *St-Ouen* about 1280 Wharton, I, 518, 636, 776; *Bricot*, 72; Dugdale, vi, 395; Atkinson, 141.

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST MASS-NEGLECT

A knight founding an anniversary at Neath in 1341, added a clause imposing "a penalty of 100s. in default [of keeping it], and another like sum of money to the Lord of Glamorgan, etc., if they discontinued their services" (Birch, *Neath*, 132). Dr K. Wood-Legh has pointed out four cases in which the bishops of Wells found it necessary to take precautions against neglect of soul-Masses. In 1374, the canons of Stavordale were bound "for every omission to pay 20s. to the bishop's alms"; the monks of Muchelney, in 1443, were to pay 12*d.* "for every Mass withdrawn" on a certain foundation, and to the archdeacon 6*d.* more per Mass "or, for a year's Masses, 26s. 8*d.*". In 1424, on a new and generous foundation, the monks of Bath were sworn to fulfilment "and for every default the bishop at his next visitation shall take £. over and above his procurations" (*Wells MSS.* 395, 459, 467). Further evidence in Dugdale-Caley, v, 472; vi, 395; Zimmerman, 177, 187 *Lit. Cant.* III, 265-6.

PRETEXTS REPUDIATED

The Council of Lambeth, in 1281, was presided over by a Franciscan archbishop, John Pecham, an ardent champion of evangelical poverty. It was natural, therefore, that one of its earliest decrees should deal with Masses and money. This runs: "Let no priest accept more annual Masses to celebrate than he has fellow-priests, except the case where he who procures the suffrages for the deceased gives his express consent for the joining of the said deceased's memory with another or with others in the Mass. Nor let the celebrant believe that he can give satisfaction for two persons by saying one Mass, when he has promised to celebrate specially and integrally for each. For although Canon Law saith [Gratian, pars III, dist. v, c. 24] that no less is received when one Mass is said for all, than if one were said for each of them, it therewith speaketh only of such Masses as are said in anxiety of heart. For God

forbid lest any Catholic should believe that one Mass devoutly celebrated should profit as much, intensively, to a thousand men, for whom perchance it is said, as if a thousand Masses were sung for them with equal devotion. For albeit the sacrifice itself, which is Christ, is of infinite virtue, yet in the sacrament or sacrifice He doth not work in the utmost plenitude of His immensity; otherwise it would never behove to say more than one Mass for each deceased. For in such mysteries He worketh by a certain distribution of His plenitude, which Himself hath bound up with them by an infallible law. Therefore we warn those priests who have received stipends for celebrating annuals or anniversaries, and who through a certain malice or sloth fail to satisfy this obligation, to supply their omissions and to make full satisfaction in future. And, whensoever they do not thus, let the profits which they have thus received for the souls of the benefactors be given to the poor; or, if they wilfully neglect both these courses, let them be corrected by their Ordinaries as men who defraud the faithful." We may complete this with the judgement of one of the most learned modern Roman liturgiologists, Dr Adrian Fortescue (*The Mass, a Study of the Roman Liturgy* (1914), 193): "The worst abuses were the *double* and *triple* Masses (*Missae bifaciatae* or *trifaciatae*) in which the celebrant said Mass from the beginning to the Preface several times, then joined one canon to all. It was done to satisfy several intentions on one day and was plainly dishonest, as well as liturgically monstrous, since really of course only one Mass was said. Card. Bona notes this as in his time an extinct abuse and says truly that such Masses 'as being monstrous, repugnant to the institution and custom of the Church, are to be reprov'd and detested'."¹

CHAPTER VI

THE COMPOSTELA LEGEND

(Herder's *Kirchenlexikon*, III (1884), 775.)

Bishop Hefele's arguments may be thus summarized. We know from the Bible that, when James was executed at Jerusalem in A.D. 44, the apostles had not yet left Jerusalem (Acts viii, 1) and that St Paul thought of going to Spain as a country not yet evangelized (Rom. xv, 24). Again, no old writer mentions St James in Spain, nor any Church council, though these were particularly numerous in Spain: the story first appears in the ninth century, and among distant German writers. Pope Gregory VII, in a letter to Spanish kings, speaks expressly of the

¹ *Rerum liturg.* I, xv, 7. Durandus had already called them "detestabiles" *loc. cit.* [i.e. *Rationale*, iv, i, 23, F.B.]. More about these kinds of Masses will be found in Wickham Legg, *Three Chapters in Recent Liturgical Research* (P.C.K. 1903), 25-44.

beginnings of the Spanish Church, yet without the least allusion to St James. At Innocent III's great Lateran Council, Archbishop Rodrigo of Toledo directly contradicted the claims of Compostela, maintaining "that James had never come to Spain; that no sure account of this could be found; and that he had only heard the story in his youth from religious women": therefore he had omitted it from the *History of Spain* which he had written (Baronius, *an.* 816, § 49). The Council agreed with the archbishop.

But, though the living saint was never in Spain, was not his dead body brought thither? Here Hefele mentions the rival claims of Toulouse, so that the evidence would suggest at most only a half-body at each place. But even this possibility is rendered far less probable by the strange details given in the official legend. St James's devoted friends (so it runs) brought his body, in the year of his execution, to this remote corner of Spain; after which absolute darkness falls upon it for nearly eight centuries! At last it was discovered in 808, 816, 825 or 835 (different writers giving different dates) through a miraculous light which shone nightly over the bush which grew at the apostle's grave; at last the bishop ordered an excavation, and a body was found which declared itself immediately by signs and wonders. Yet Cardinal Baronius (*an.* 816, § 52) pointed out that Venantius Fortunatus [600] speaks of both James the Greater and James the Less as buried at Ephesus with John the Evangelist, and specifies as patron saint of Spain not James the Apostle, but Vincent. However (to continue the legend), King Ramiro I in 843 saw St James in a white robe fighting for him against the Moors; and, little by little, this far-off village became a sort of religious capital. Baronius writes truly enough: "From this time forward, that sacred spot began to be frequented by the concourse of the whole world, on account of the vast miracles with which it glittered; so that I should judge that man to hit upon the exact truth who should bestow the title *Storehouse of Miracles* upon that venerable sepulchre, open to the whole world." Nicholas III, in a letter to the king in 1278, had already spoken of "the church of Compostela, which St James hath made illustrious by the merits of his venerable body, and hath willed that it should be visited by the concourse of divers nations in praise of the Divine Name" (Raynaldus, *an.* 1278, § 32).

"INVENTION" OF RELICS

"Two years before [*i.e.* in 1286], abbot Girard had received a great consolation through the discovery which Guillaume du Blé, Bishop of Châlon, made in [abbot Girard's] church of St Stephen [at Dijon], viz. one joint of St John Baptist's neck, the whole head of Saint Corneille the martyr, and three stones which, as tradition assures us, had served for the martyrdom of St Stephen. These relics were then brought forth and exposed to the veneration of the faithful, to whom the Bishop of Châlon granted 40 days' indulgence [daily until the Christmas following]" (Fyot, 139; *Preuves*, 141).

SHRINES AND MONEY

The shrine of St Edmund at Bury was bringing in an income of more than £120 a year at the end of the thirteenth century (*Mem. Bury St Edmunds*, R.S. III, 32). Glastonbury, in 1290, could boast fifty-seven separate grants of indulgences, amounting in all to 1223 days. Of these, eight grants, amounting to 123 days, were for worshipping and offering to the relics (Joh. Glaston., ed. Hearne, 383ff.). In the thirteen years between 1291 and 1360 for which the Ely sacrist's rolls have survived, we find that the offerings at St Etheldreda's shrine, apart from the other altars, averaged £32. 2s. 9½d. a year. From 1350 to 1360 they averaged within a few shillings of £40. (Chapman, I, 119.) Busch [1450] tells us how he has seen 100 florins offered at the yearly festival of the miraculous Virgin at the monastery of Bodingen (*Chron. Windes.* 359; cf. 337). The splendour of the offerings to St Cuthbert is described in the *Rites of Durham* (2nd ed. p. 4). The historian Depoin (pp. 134-5) gives very interesting particulars as to the disputes between monks and townsfolk with regard to the money offered before different relics at Pontoise in 1332. Blomefield gives significant details from the accounts of St Margaret's priory church at Lynn. In 1437, the offerings from the parishioners totalled £68. os. 2d.; in 1509, although a new pilgrimage chapel had been built, these had sunk to £52. 11s. 1d., and in 1535, apparently, to £21. 9s. 4d. The offerings to the images sank, also, from £3. 2s. 0½d. in 1447 to 6s. 8d. (apparently) in 1509. On the other hand the town itself was growing richer; for in 1509 the personal tithes (*i.e.* tax on the profits of traders, artisans and servants) came to £21. 8s., and in 1535 to £23 (*Hist. of Norfolk*, 1st ed., 589-91). The general evidence seems to suggest a considerable fall in the financial value of relics some time before the Reformation. Davine notes that the amounts returned by different monasteries to Henry VIII's commissioners in 1535 were often very small; but he suggests also the possibility that the returns may very well be untrustworthy for a source of income which could so easily be concealed or understated (*Eng. Monasteries*, 103).

The virtues of the relics sometimes spread very far afield. In 1374, the monks of Bury possessed a chapel at Wainfleet in Lincolnshire, with, of course, an image of St Edmund. This image became painfully conscious of neglect, and appeared one night in a dream not to any one of the really responsible parties, the monks, but to one Alan, a local tiler or thatcher, to whom it said: "Thou knowest that my chapel of Wainfleet is wholly ruinous and is in utmost need of repair [*omnino t ruinosa et indiget reparatione necessaria*]. Therefore, do thou set aside all other occupations and hasten to perform cheerfully, and as quickly as possible, this work whereof I have need." Reluctantly at first, but "disturbed and admonished" by the vision, Alan postponed a job he had already undertaken, and restored the chapel roof at his own expense. The result was, that he himself became a prosperous business man, and the statue now performed a series of miracles, seventeen of

which are described by the Bury chronicler. In two cases, the patients even appeared to be dead; but a vow to St Edmund, accompanied by a penny, duly bent for luck, recalled them at once to life. The chronicle continues with an account of seven miracles in 1371-2 at another of St Edmund's chapels, at Lyng in Norfolk. It concludes with a series from other parts, of which the last is sufficiently remarkable. "In a certain wood hard by the aforesaid monastery [dedicated to St Edmund] sheep and wolves feed together in great multitudes; yet the sheep, miraculously, through the merits of St Edmund, are altogether unhurt by the wolves." But this is in Ireland, at Athassel (*Mem. St Edmunds*, III, 327ff.).

Further evidence for the financial value of relics may be found in Luchaire, *Social France*, 32, 231ff.; Pontissara, 636; *Sens-Reliques*, 250ff.; Abelard (ed. Cousin), I, 577; *Conc. Lateran.* IV, cap. 9; *Dives et Pauper*, Com. VII, ch. 3; *St Francis to Dante*, 1st ed. 285ff.; *Spec. Eccl.* 59; Joinville, ch. XIV *ad init.* (Sampson Low, 177); Bonnard, I, 422-5; Pez, *Scriptt. Rer. Aust.* II, 641, 665; Gautier de Coincy, *Miracles de N.-D.* 138, 139; Glaber in *P.L.* CXLII, cols. 655, 674; Winter, *Die Cistercienser*, I, 394; Wadding, *Annales*, v, 149; Denifle, *La Désolation des Églises*, I, 140, 359; Duckett, *Cluny*, 47; Van Lokeren, pt. I, 137, 146; *Vendôme*, II, 6, 30, 33; Chassin, 35; V. Arx, II, i, 288; Caes. Heist. II (or I), 137-8, 140, 156; *Lyre*, 210; Bulliot, II, 147, 225; Schreiber, II, 232, n. 3, 244ff.; *Five Cent. of Relig.* I, 245, 271, 396, 424; Dorlandus, *Chronic. Cartusiense*, 368; *Annales Benedictini*, v, 9, 178, 252, 298, 344, 363, 371, 392, 442, 470, 517, 577, 583; VI, 73, 95, 112-13, 163, 342; Martène, *Comment.* 866ff.; Martène, *Thesaurus*, III, 1293-6; IV, 1245, 1253, 1281, 1453, 1455, 1467; Martène, *Voy. Lit.* I, 7; II, 35; *Eiflia Sacra*, I, 205, 513, 690; II, 612; *Aurillac*, II, 40, 101, 598; *Lit. Cant.* II, p. lii; III, pp. xxxvff.; Eckertz, I, 419; II, 374; *Miracles de St-Benoît* (de Certain), bk. VIII, 308, 426; Suso's *Autobiog.* trans. Knox 105ff. (ch. xxv); Guibert, *P.L.* 156, 621; Digby, *Mores Catholici*, III bk. x, 306; Hugo de S. Caro, VII, 141, col. 3; Joh. Glaston. (Hearne) I, 160, 180-2; *Gloucester Chartulary*, R.S. I, 39; *Nouvelle Hist. de l'Abbaye Royale de Tournus*, I, 245; II, 105ff.; Blomefield's *Norfolk*, I, 450, 589; Fyot, 138; Chambers, *Medieval Stage*, I, 49; Morley, *Bartholomew Fair*, 1-25; *Revue Cath. de Normandie* (Oct. 1923), 221; *Marmoutier* (Delalande), 54; Ord. Vitalis in *P.L.* CLXXXVIII, cols. 258, 265; Linneborn, 25, 30; *St-Paul de Besançon* (Marquiset), 41, 107; *Caunes* (Béziat), 39, 41, 204; Doue (Pontvianne), 268; *Medieval Letter of Christchurch, Canterbury* (ed. Sheppard), XLIV.

DECAYING POPULARITY

"The Feretrars' Rolls make known to us that there was a local saint named John Warton, to whom offerings were made at St Oswald's Church. These were assigned to the Feretrar by the prior and convent in 1456, and from that time appear among his receipts, having previously gone to the hostillar. Soon after this change the popularity of

the saint appears to have waned, for the offerings fell from 114s. 9½d. in 1456 to 89s. 3d. in 1459; to 16s. 6½d. in 1461 and 13s. 4d. in 1488; then from 1513 to 1537 they range from 8d. to 15d. In 1513 he first appears as 'Sanctus'. In the *Liber de Reliquiis* occur relics of another local saint, the venerable Robert of Stanhope, of whom nothing else is known" (*Durham Acct. Rolls*, Surtees Soc. (1900), III, introd. xxi).

For the decay of the cult of St Louis of Toulouse see Toynbee, 227.

A DOUBTING CARDINAL

(Martène, *Thesaurus*, III, 1848.)

"At the Roman Court, this pious business of St Edmund met with so much contradiction and sinister interpretation from the senators of that Court, that whatsoever might be said or written concerning his miracles were taken for ravings by those who believed not. Therefore his friends were in consternation and fear; but his adversaries, as it seemed, prospered in their own inventions. For I myself, who write these things with a slender and uncultivated, yet veracious, pen, heard one of the Cardinals speaking thus, 'What do ye,' (he said) 'wherefore do ye labour and waste your time in vain? We believe not in your miracles, nor do we approve them with the authority of the Apostolic See; for miracles have shrunk away and tongues have ceased, and nought remains but to have respect to the works which we must examine in future. And I say' (quoth he) 'that, but for the fact that the Church Universal hath accepted the memory and the legend of St Martin, I would confidently say that St Martin never raised three dead folk; for the Lord Jesus Christ would never have granted a privilege like unto His own: He who, while on this earth, is recorded to have raised only three from the dead.' I dare boldly say that this [Cardinal] had been a forgetful hearer of that divine and evangelical sentence; for the Truth saith, *He that believeth in Me, the works that I do he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do*. Yet such presumption in him was fairly avenged. For, when he was created legate of the Roman Church, he came to Pontigny and, utterly humbled, he fell to earth at the threshold of the holy father Edmund, confessing his error and proclaiming publicly, *All that slandered thee shall come to thee and shall worship the steps of thy feet*."

CHAPTER VII

SALIMBENE AND THE MAGDALENE

(Coulton, *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 311.)

"Salimbene seems as naïvely delighted as Charles of Anjou at the discovery of a fresh body of 'the Magdalene, whole save for one leg' near Aix in Provence 'where I dwelt in the year when the King of France went on his Crusade, for I was of the convent there. When

this body was found, her epitaph could scarce be read with a crystal glass, for the antiquity of the writing. And it pleased King Charles that the body should be displayed abroad and exalted and honoured, and that a solemn feast should be made in her honour. And so it was: wherefore the contentions and contradictions and cavils and abuses and falsehoods which were of old concerning her body are henceforth ended. For the men of Sinigaglia had formerly claimed to possess it, and the men of Vézelay had it likewise, as they said, and had even a legend thereof: but it is manifest that the body of the same woman cannot be in three places. (For this same cause there is a bitter quarrel at Ravenna concerning the body of St Apollinare; for the men of Chiassi, which was once a city, say that they possess it: and the citizens of Ravenna claim to possess it too.) Now the Magdalene's cave, wherein she did penitence thirty years, is five miles distant from Marseilles, and I slept there one night immediately after her feast. It is in a high rocky mountain, and great enough, if I remember well, to contain a thousand men. There are three altars and a dropping well of water like unto the well of Siloa, and a most fair road to it, and without is a church hard by the cave, where dwells a priest; and above the cave the mountain is as high again as the height of the Baptistery of Parma, and the cave itself is so far raised above the level ground that three towers like that of the Asinelli of Bologna could not reach it, if I remember aright: so that great trees which grow below show like nettles or bushes of sage; and, since this region is utterly uninhabited and desolate, therefore the women and noble ladies of Marseilles when they come thither for devotion's sake bring with them asses laden with bread and wine, and pasties and fish, and such other meats as they desire. Here then is a miracle for the confirmation of the Invention of the Magdalene's body; which miracle the Lord showed through her to prove that it is hers indeed. In those days a young butcher was going upon the road, and an acquaintance asked him whence he came. He answered, 'From the town of St Maximin, where the body of the blessed Mary Magdalene has been newly found; and I kissed her leg.' The other answered, 'Thou hast kissed no leg of hers, but rather the leg of an ass or a mare, which the clergy show to the simple for lucre's sake.' When therefore a great contention had arisen between these two concerning this matter, the undevout man who believed not in the Magdalene smote the devout man with many blows of his sword, yet he with the Magdalene's help took no hurt. Then he who was devoted to the Magdalene smote the undevout man but once, and there needed no more; for he straightway lost his life and found his death. So the champion of the Magdalene, grieving that he had slain a man, even in self-defence, and fearing to be taken by the kinsfolk of the deceased, fled to the city of Arles and thence to St-Gilles, that he might be safe there, and give place unto wrath. But the father of the slain man, by a bribe to a traitor, caused the slayer of his son to be cast into prison, for he was already condemned to be hanged. Yet in the night before his execution, as he lay awake in his cell, the Magdalene appeared to him and said, 'Fear not, my

servant, defender and champion of mine honour, for thou shalt not die: I will help thee in due time, that all men who see may marvel and give thanks to God our Creator, Who worketh marvels, and to me, His servant. But when thou shalt be free, remember this kindness that I have done thee, and give the reward of this good fortune to God thy liberator, to the benefit of thine own soul.' With these words the Magdalene disappeared, and left the man comforted. Next day, when he was hanged on the gallows, yet his body felt neither harm nor pain; and suddenly, in the sight of all who had come to see, there flew swiftly down from heaven a dove, dazzling white as snow, and alighted on the gallows, and loosed the knot round the neck of the hanged man, its own devotee, and laid him on the earth wholly unhurt. But when the officials and men of justice, at the instigation of the dead man's relatives, would have hanged him again, he escaped by the goodwill of the butchers, of whom a very great band was there, ready armed with swords and staves; for he had been their comrade and friend, and they had also seen this stupendous miracle. Therefore when he had told all men how he had slain the man unwillingly to defend his own life and the Magdalene's honour, and how the Saint had promised him in his dungeon that she would free him when the time came, then they held themselves satisfied, and praised God and the blessed Magdalene who had freed him. And the Count of Provence, hearing these things desired to see the man and hear it from his own lips, and to keep him about his person at the court all the days of his life. Yet he answered that if any should offer him the lordship of the whole world he would not end his life anywhere but in the service of the Magdalene, in the town of St Maximin, in the place wherein her body was newly found in this year 1283."

RIVAL RELICS

(Migne, *P.L.* cxvi, 77.)

Archbishop Amulo's complete letter would run perhaps to a dozen of these pages; I can only summarize it briefly here. The two monks (real or false) had brought relics supposedly from Italy; but, as Amulo argues, "the man whom they recognized as worthy of so great veneration, and whom they had chosen to translate with such affection, and had borne so assiduously over so great a distance, how could they forget his name even for the space of an hour", so that they could not pray to him? "Or how could they be so brutish and slothful as not even to take the trouble of committing his name to writing for their remembrance?" One was now dead; the other had gone to enquire and bring back report, but had never returned. Meanwhile "these bones, brought by such base persons and signalized by no assertion of truth, and brought into the church on the strength of so foolish a story, are kept in a reverend niche beside the tomb of the said glorious martyr [St-Bénigne], and certain miracles had begun to be worked"; not true useful cases of healing, but hysterical manifestations of beatings and blows, "wherewith wretched women appeared to fall about and to be

dashed together in the very house of prayer, although they showed no sign of injury in any part of their body, nor the least trace of any blow. . . . After a while, as though they had recovered their senses and were healed, they assert that they cannot leave the spot, because, if they attempt to return home, they are forthwith struck with I know not what plague and compelled to return to the church from whence they came. Among these (it is said) are not only girls, but also younger married women and some of riper age, both of more honourable and of viler sort." The furore has spread now from St-Bénigne to other churches in the city. Very likely two or three real miracles of healing have taken place; but these must be ascribed to St-Bénigne. The rest is probably due to the excitement of a new corpse supposed to be saintly, among people already thronging the churches in Lent and looking forward to the greater religious solemnity of Easter; an excitement exploited by "vile and wicked fellows, either under compulsion of hunger or instigated by greed of gain". Such folk (says God) "eat the sins of My people". A similar phenomenon was seen recently at Uzès; but the Bishop of Narbonne dealt effectively with it. "He decreed and commanded that they should altogether cease from thenceforth to frequent that place which they had begun superstitiously to haunt, and that they should rather spend to the profit of the poor, and upon works of mercy, whatsoever they had been wont to bestow upon that place. Upon this, that whole deception ceased forthwith in that place and in others wherein the like had already begun; and the faithful people breathed again under the health and tranquillity which they desired." Therefore (pursues Amulo) let us, in this Dijon case, proclaim to the people that they must bring their prayers and offerings to their own parish churches, where they were baptized and now hear Mass and make confession and are like to be buried: let the money thus contributed go to orphans and widows, poor folk and pilgrims: for "this is the legitimate and ecclesiastical form of religion". "But now, how absurd it is that things so legitimate, so assiduously proclaimed, so just, should either be negligently omitted or observed scantily under compulsion, and that men should show the utmost promptitude for things which they follow in mere supervacuity of mind, not in consequence of any preaching or teaching but even in the face of [orthodox] resistance!" Otherwise we leave men, and especially women, a prey to diabolical figments, and make the House of Prayer into a place of trade and a den of thieves.

These abuses of relic-worship cannot be said to have abated with time; on the contrary, they were possibly even worse, as being more deeply ingrained by custom, on the eve of the French Revolution. Here is the protest of the learned and orthodox canonist Van Espen (*Jus Ecclesiasticum*, pars III, tit. iv, c. 3, § 57; ed. 1724, I, 990). He is explaining the bishop's duty of discouraging or prohibiting certain observances, "wherefrom not only the people hopes for the conservation or recovery of temporal goods, or of human life, but also some emolument comes therefrom to ecclesiastics or their Churches or com-

munities. For it cannot be believed how easily such observances, even when evidently superstitious, grow; and, when they have grown, how difficult it is to suppress them. When such suppression is attempted—nay, is only suggested—at once clamours are excited among the people as though it were a question of suppressing the religious worship of saints or images or relics itself, or the rites which the Church has approved. Then nothing is heard or dinned into the popular ear but zeal for the preservation of our ancestral religion; whereat the excited multitude cries even as that Asian multitude cried ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’ when spurred on by Demetrius and his fellows under a cloak of veneration for Diana and her temple, but in truth because ‘Demetrius a silversmith, who made silver temples for Diana, brought no small gain to the craftsmen, whom he calling together, with the workmen of like occupation, said: Sirs, you know that our gain is by this trade.’ If you observe the true motives of those who are wont most eagerly to excite the people against the abolition of such observances, and against bishops or pastors who meditate such abolition, you will find beyond doubt that these are led by a like motive to that which aroused Demetrius and his fellows to rebel against Paul and the Apostles for the conservation of the worship of Diana and her temple: ‘Because our gain is by this trade.’”

Chassin (*Les Cahiers des Curés*, 35) writes concerning the end of the *Ancien Régime*, “Men laughed at the spectacle of the Cistercian monks disputing with two other Orders for the possession of ‘le vrai saint prépuce de Notre Seigneur’; or at ‘the Tear of Christ’, which brought to the monastery of La Charité some 3000 or 4000 *livres* a year; or at the five or six ‘Heads of St John Baptist’ adored in different places; or at that ‘Holy Navel’, which the bishop of Châlons was obliged to put under an interdict, after he had opened the reliquary and ascertained that it contained nothing whatever.” According to the author of *Ce qu’on a fait de l’Église* (Alcan (1912), 282) the first of the relics here catalogued by Chassin is still worshipped at the convent of Charroux, and “has a sumptuous monument in the church of Calenta near Viterbo; Gambalunga published a critical history in defence of it and to recommend its worship, with the approbation of Pius VII, [under the title of] *Narrazione critico-storica della reliquia del Sacrosanto prepuzio di N.S. Gesu Christo* (Roma, Poggioli)”.

CHAPTER VIII

FURTHER NOTES ON RELICS

(1) St-Ouen-de-Rouen.

When the monks of St-Ouen rang their abbey bells and cried out that the Archbishop of Rouen was planning to remove the relics of St-Ouen, the whole town rose in revolt and the viscount had difficulty

in protecting the archbishop's servants from death. This was in 1073; a much earlier notice tells us how the citizens gave these relics credit for having saved the whole city from famine and plague (Pommeraye, 135, 180).

(2) *Dorchester, Oxon.*

"Nothing is known of the history of the abbey until the thirteenth century, when we find that about 1223 its abbot (no doubt Abbot Roger), after wasting its goods, had retired to the monastery of St Frideswide, taking with him 48 marks. In consequence there was a lawsuit between the two houses, which at Easter, 1225, had been in progress for some time. Perhaps it was to divert the attention of the brethren to something nobler that a petition was sent to the pope in 1224 asking that they might move the bones of Birinus to a more worthy place. The pope, in reply, sent a mandate to the archbishop that he was to visit the abbey, and see whether the tomb was really that of Birinus; for that Bede narrated that his bones were taken to Winchester. What followed is described for us by one who was present. The archbishop, on his arrival, was informed that the tomb had been discovered, apparently about fifty years before, through a vision that appeared to one of the canons, telling him to look for the tomb before the altar of the Holy Cross; the tomb was found and opened, and the body of a bishop was discovered; miracles had followed: a leper had been cleansed, a dead man had been brought to life, and one had learned to speak French in three days. The bones which had been taken to Winchester were from a tomb in the corner behind a door, not a likely place to choose for the burial of such a saint as Birinus. Moreover an anchorite of Holywell near Oxford heard a voice saying: 'It is Bertinus behind the door, but Birinus under the pavement', Bertinus being reputed a bishop of Dorchester, tenth in succession from Birinus. The tomb was thereupon opened again in the presence of the archbishop, the body of a bishop was found, and the conclusion was that Bede, trusting to hearsay, had made a mistake, and should have said that the bones of Bertinus were taken to Winchester. Unfortunately for this argument Bertinus would have lived after the days of Bede; but at all events there was supposed to be satisfactory evidence that this was the body of Birinus. In the next century a costly marble shrine was made for the saint, and in 1301 an indulgence of forty days was granted to those who should visit the bones of Birinus at Dorchester. At the Dissolution the offerings at the shrine were worth £5 a year" (*V.C.H. Oxon.* II, 87).

(3) *Relics and business at St-Loup (Bib. Éc. Chartes, t. II (1840-1), 255 ff.; article by F. Bourquelot).*

"Cette prédilection pour le bienheureux auquel étaient dédiés les monuments religieux, est un des traits caractéristiques de cette époque du moyen âge, et l'on peut dire qu'elle avait en quelque sorte fait oublier Dieu. Je n'oserais affirmer que notre prieuré eût au com-

mencement du douzième siècle des reliques de son patron; mais il est certain qu'en 1144 Hugues de Toucy, archevêque de Sens, ayant visité la châsse de saint Loup, à la requête de l'abbé et des religieux de Sainte-Colombe-lès-Sens, obtint quelques portions du chef et quelques ossements de saint Loup, et en fit présent aux moines de Naud. Bientôt une querelle s'éleva entre les deux maisons; chacune se prétendait en possession des précieuses reliques. Quoiqu'une charte de Hugues, donnée 1160, fût de nature à dissiper tous les doutes, la question fut décidée en faveur de Sainte-Colombe par le pape Innocent III, vers l'année 1212. Mais le prieuré de Saint-Loup de Naud n'avait pas tout perdu. Les Bollandistes affirment que, malgré les assertions d'Innocent, il possédait encore quelques ossements précieux; seulement ce n'étaient pas la tête et *quaedam membra*. Ces ossements fournirent à l'église de Saint-Loup un revenu considérable. Le jour de la fête du patron, le prieur, avec la permission des archevêques de Sens et de Reims, promenait ces reliques dans leurs diocèses, et y faisait une quête qui rapportait annuellement 160 livres aux religieux. Mais pour accorder l'autorisation, les prélats exigeaient de fortes sommes. Le pape Urbain V, par une bulle de 1367, adressée à Jacques, prieur du prieuré de Saint-Loup de Naud, décida que l'autorisation serait donnée *gratis*, et que le prieur ou ses délégués seraient favorablement traités dans leur voyage par les autorités ecclésiastiques. Il fallut faire disparaître aussi les difficultés qui s'élevaient de la part des religieux de Sainte-Colombe-lès-Sens. En 1432, une transaction fut conclue entre ces moines, d'une part, et de l'autre, les abbés et religieux de Saint-Pierre-le-Vif, et frère Jehan d'Apremont, prieur du prieuré de Saint-Loup de No, au sujet de la quête avec les reliques de saint Loup. On convint qu'un moine de Sainte-Colombe serait présent au moment où le prieur de Saint-Loup donnerait au plus offrant le bail ou la ferme de la quête; que si les parties voulaient se charger elles-mêmes de la quête, ou étaient forcées de la faire, le prieur commettrait de par elles un voyageur-quêteur, qui lui rendrait comptes en présence d'un religieux de Sainte-Colombe; qu'aux lieux où les reliques de saint Loup, possédées par l'abbaye de Sainte-Colombe, avaient coutume d'être portées, on présenterait avec elles les reliques appartenant au prieuré de Naud, et réciproquement; que les procureurs chargés des reliques paieraient deux parts à Saint-Loup de Naud et une part à Sainte-Colombe; que le congé des prélats, pour faire la quête, serait obtenu au nom du prieuré de Naud; enfin que les procès seraient soutenus par les parties, en proportion de leur part dans les recettes. On ne voit plus, dans le reste de l'histoire de Saint-Loup, d'actes relatifs à cette affaire. Le fruit de la quête annuelle diminua probablement de jour en jour, et on n'y attacha plus d'importance."

CHAPTER IX

TITHES AND CONSCIENCE

(1) THE DONOR

"Be it known unto all men, both present and future, that I, Barbota, possessed patrimonially the church of St-Brévin, so that I was wont, without contradiction from any man, to place in that church whatsoever chaplain I would, by the year or by the month. But, having learned from Benedict Bishop of Nantes and from many others that the Court of Rome had, in several councils, commanded the bishops to smite with the sword of excommunication, until they should make proper satisfaction, all patrimonial patrons of churches who should neglect to grant such churches to monks or canons or other servants of God, therefore, since I would rather save my soul than commit it to the everlasting torments of hell, by the counsel of my lord Benedict Bishop of Nantes and of my friends, I have granted the aforesaid church in perpetuity to the monks of St-Aubin, on condition that they make monks of my two sons Evan and Daniel, and that they provide for me until my death. The monks therefore, by the counsel of their abbot Gerard and their whole chapter, and with the assent of Benedict Bishop of Nantes, have appointed a chaplain to that church, to whom they have granted the third part of the whole revenues thereof, reserving two parts for themselves. Afterwards, I and my friends humbly besought the monks, and they granted a third portion of their own two parts to my daughter Domeline for the term of her natural life; and if this my daughter aforesaid bear to her husband a male child who attains to the office of priesthood, the monks have agreed to grant him for life that third part together with the chaplaincy of the church; after his death, the monks are to have his third part also." The bishop was to receive a gold piece yearly from the church in recognition of his assent to the transaction (A. de la Borderie, *Recueil d'actes inédits etc.* Rennes (1888), 65). Yet, just about this time, the great canonist Ivo of Chartres ruled that it was illegal for monasteries "to accept tithes and [church] oblations from those to whom they do not truly belong, to wit, from layfolk" (*P.L.* CLXII, col. 200).

(2) THE RECIPIENTS

(a) *The Mother of Cîteaux.*

"Between 1076 [when Molesme was founded] and 1083, donations were few. In 1083, Renard, Bishop of Langres, anxious to provide for the monks' endowment, which was still insufficient, solemnly authorized his clergy and vassals to give up *the churches which they enjoyed* and the fiefs which they held from him, in favour of this monastery, the existence of which he now recognized for the first time

by a public deed.... It may be seen from the number of churches incorporated with the abbey, especially before 1106, that the seignorial families responded with some docility to this impulse [from the bishop]. *The main constituents of these pious donations were churches, whether in cities or smaller towns or villages, and cemeteries and tithes*; and, for the monastery of Molesme, the occupation of the parish was often the first step towards setting up a seignory [over the place]." When Renard's successor, in 1101, solemnly confirmed the possessions of the monks, he specified these as consisting of "estates, manors (*villas*), churches, chapels, tithes, oblations, burial-fees and all other beneficiary possessions whatsoever". And the postscript which the bishop adds is equally significant. It runs: "Moreover, we grant that, in your churches, you should be free, without any contradiction, to seek fit priests and regularly place and ordain them." This *regulariter ponere et ordinare* seems clearly to refer to institution (not ordination), and to amount to a full concession of the *personatus* to the abbey; fuller, in fact, than later law allowed; for no saving clause is added for the bishop's right of institution. It seems implicitly, if not explicitly, to institute the abbey, once for all, into the *personatus*, and to make the priests who actually served these churches into mere curates at will. The bishop recites sixty-eight such churches or chapels even at this early date of 1101; and, while the bulk of his deed testifies plainly to their value for the monks as revenue, this fact is perhaps even emphasized by the postscript; for it is only by an afterthought that he remembers to grant them valuable spiritual privileges (*Cart. Molesme*, I, 127, 131; II, 7, 259).

(b) *The First Cistercians.*

St Stephen Harding's words run, in *Exordium Cisterciensis Coenobii* (Guignard, *Mon. Primitifs*, 71): "And because neither in the Rule nor in the Life of St Benedict could they find that the Doctor had possessed churches or altar-dues or church offerings or burial-fees, nor tithes from other men, nor ovens nor mills nor manors nor serfs, nor that women had ever entered his monastery, nor that he had buried dead folk there except his own sister, therefore [these first Cistercians] abdicated all those things.... Moreover they said that the holy Fathers who were mouthpieces of the Holy Ghost,¹ and whose decrees cannot be transgressed without sacrilege, had divided tithes into four portions; one for the bishop, another for the priest, a third for strangers that came to the parish, or widows and orphans and poor folk that had no other livelihood, and the fourth to the restoration of the Church. And since they found, in this reckoning, no allowance for the monk who possesses lands of his own wherefrom he may live by his own labours and from his own flocks,² therefore they refused to take unrighteously to themselves that which was another man's right. Lo how these new-made Knights of Christ, despising the riches of this world, and living

¹ *I.e.* at the great Church Councils.

² And who, therefore, cannot come under the definition given above, "poor folk that had no other livelihood" beyond the parish dole.

in poverty with the poor Christ, began to take counsel with each other by what device or art or handicraft they might sustain, in this mortal life, themselves and the guests that came to them, whether rich or poor, since the Rule commanded them to receive all such folk as Christ Himself. Then they resolved to receive the bearded folk, lay converts, by licence of their bishop, and to treat them in life and death even as themselves, except that they were no monks;¹ and to receive also hired labourers, since they saw that, without such help, they would not fully keep the precepts of the Rule by day and by night."²

CHAPTER X

VICARS' INCOMES

In 1312 and 1313, bishops specified five pounds, or even five marks, as enough for a priest until he should be provided with a better benefice. Even in 36 and in 40 Ed. III six marks is reckoned sufficient. Lyndwood, in the early fifteenth century, says that the estimate has risen to 8 or 10 marks; under Hen. VIII it had advanced to £8 (Sir T. Duffus Hardy, in preface to *Reg. Palat. Dunelm.* R.S. III, p. lxxxviii).

MONKS AND TITHE QUARRELS

A few specimens may be indicated: Migne, *P.L.* ccxi, col. 531; *St Benet's*, 190; *Gladbach*, 27, 31; *Orval*, 631-2, 659; Kirk, *Abingdon*, p. xlii; *Lyre*, 184, 196, 208; *Jully*, 109, 111, 131, 137.

CHAPTER XI

WALTER MAP'S EVIDENCE CONTINUED

De Nugis, trans. M. James, pp. 49ff.)

After the passage quoted in my text, the author proceeds thus: "Those upon whom comes an invasion of Cistercians may be sure that they are doomed to a lasting exile. In other cases part of the population are deported for definite reasons. These without any cause proscribe the whole, and they who are weakened by sickness or age succumb the sooner from lack of food, because less support is left to them. They

¹ "Excepto monachatu"; not monks in the fullest sense.

² This would be true in Burgundy, and still truer in more northern parts, where neither climate nor soil would be so favourable as in central Italy; moreover, the church services had become longer and more burdensome since St Benedict's time.

are left destitute; and whithersoever the prospect of food calls the hungry men, they leave their parents and neighbours; all who can follow rushing to any precipice, for hunger fears no attack of death. Some are hooked into robbery or theft, and despairing of an end to their misery, spurn life, care nothing for any punishment—nay, challenge death to attack their throats, since it has long thrust them down into every kind of crime, and are glad to be done with the light which has been hopelessly embittered by the pangs of want. How monstrous, how fierce, how devilish a scourge is hunger! How cruel an affliction, how abominable, how detestable is the oppression which causelessly brings Christian folk into that dungeon! Even Dacian and Nero dealt more kindly. And, as a short agony is more quickly passed through than a long pressure of troubles, so their cruelty appears kinder than that which brings on poverty. Poverty which retains no shade of self-respect, has no virtue, bristles with crime, is foul with vices, has no reverence for God, rages implacably against all that is honourable: (poverty) which fills galleys with pirates, defiles towns with thieves, arms forests with robbers, changes lambs to wolves, drives women from the marriage-bed to the brothel: which, containing in itself every form of torment, has more injustices than justice owns penalties, more offences than she has bolts, more targets than she has arrows. Kind God! how can these be thy sons who bring such things to birth in thy daughters and in the sons of light?"

FREQUENCY OF APPROPRIATION

Mr C. F. Wood-Legh has kindly supplied me with a full list of the appropriations in Edward III's reign. They total 539, and 303 of these are to men's convents, 51 to women's. Of the rest, Collegiate churches and chantries got 93, colleges at Oxford or Cambridge 40, bishops 15, secular cathedrals 16, hospitals 18, the Order of Hospitallers 3. Of the men's convents, 3 were friaries. The highest number of monastic appropriations in any one year was 19; only two years passed without one or more.

TYPICAL APPROPRIATION DEEDS

The following two cases may be taken, I think, as typical, neither too favourable nor too unfavourable:

(1) *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, A.D. 1356, p. 443. "Indenture between the king and the prior and convent of Durham witnessing that the king, in view of the waste of their possessions by the Scots, had granted licence for the prior and convent to appropriate the church of Hemmynburgh, in the diocese of York, and the prior and convent in return surrendered letters patent whereby Edward I had granted to them and their successors £40 yearly at the exchequer of Berwick on Tweed for the sustenance of chantries, which £40 the prior and convent had not been satisfied of in the past, and released to him the £40 yearly and all

arrears thereof, granting further that as soon as the said church was appropriated they will find a monk or secular chaplain to celebrate Mass daily in a place called Le Galyleye in Durham church for the souls of Edward I and of the present king, and for his progenitors, as well as two monks or secular chaplains, one at the altar of St Cuthbert in the said church and the other in Hemmyngburgh church, to celebrate Masses and other offices daily for the good estate of the king and Queen Philippa and their heirs, for their souls, when they are no more, and for the souls of their progenitors, with six wax-lights to burn every Sunday and single festival of Apostles and other double or principal festival used in the church of Durham, while Mass at the High Altar and matins and other canonical hours are being celebrated, of which lights two shall be of great weight 20 lb. each, and two shall be of smaller size of fit form and weight which shall be put by the great altar before the shrine of the said confessor, and the other two shall be put before his banner in the same church. They will also celebrate the anniversary of the present king every year for ever in the choir with five copes at least and on that day pay 60s. to those of the convent present, for their pittance, and make a distribution of 1*d.* to each of 1000 poor persons, for the soul of the king after his death, and during his life make a like distribution yearly on the day of St Cuthbert in March. The prior and convent have also released to the king any right they or their successors could have in the advowson or patronage of the church of Symondbourn, in the diocese of Durham. For the observance of which, this indenture shall be read on each of the anniversaries or on the festival of St Cuthbert, in Durham church, before the high altar at the beginning of the great Mass, the people standing by, for a perpetual memory, and every prior at his installation shall take an oath for the observance of the premises; and shall bring or send to the king a true copy of the indenture within three months of his being made prior. By K. & C."

(2) *Calendar of Papal Letters*, v, 10 (A.D. 1397). "Confirmation of the appropriation by Archbishop Thomas to the *mensa*, value not exceeding 4000 marks, of the prior and chapter of Canterbury, of the church of Godmersham of their patronage with the annexed or dependent chapel of Challok, in the diocese, void by the resignation of John West, value not exceeding 100 marks. The appropriation, which reserved a portion for a perpetual vicar, was made in consideration of their having expended more than 5000 marks in rebuilding the nave of the church of Canterbury which the late Archbishop Simon had pulled down at his own expense for the purpose of rebuilding it, which his death prevented him from doing, the said and other necessary works not being able to be completed for 6000 marks more."

SELFISH APPROPRIATION

At Evesham, about A.D. 1225, some at least of the appropriated tithes went to improve the monks' food. At Bury St Edmunds, in 1308-9, a fresh church was appropriated "for the sustentation of the community" (Dugdale-Caley, III, 120). The great cathedral priory of Canterbury, not long after, appropriated Meopham; the transaction should be read in connexion with the list of silver plate owned by the monks (*Report Hist. Comm.* IX, 105 b, III a). West Somerton was appropriated to Butley, "to find food and clothing for two canons" (Dugdale-Caley, VI, 379). Somewhere about 1400 the Abbot of Glastonbury earmarked £30 a year, partly from the appropriation of a parish church, for giving to each monk an allowance of private pocket-money which was, in the strict sense, even illegal (Joh. Glaston., ed. Hearne (1726), 272-7). At Tournus the revenues of two parishes (beyond what the vicar got for his work) went to the monks' pittances (*Nouvelle Hist. de T.* (Dijon, 1733), *preuves*, 286). In 1218 Archbishop Engelbert of Cologne appropriated two churches to the canons of Aachen "to be converted for ever to the common profits of the refectory of the brethren who in that church serve our Lord and the Blessed Virgin with continual ministry of canonical hours" (T. J. Lacomblet, *Urkundenbuch*, etc. II (1846), 42). At Limburg, in 1279, the bishop's excuse for granting the appropriation of a church is that the monastery "is situated at the summit of a hill, remote from the frequentation of men and utterly destitute of those adventitious consolations which other monasteries sometimes enjoy, and because it exercises the care of hospitality to all who come thither". But he is well aware that part of this new endowment will go "to the increase of the monks' own allowances" (F. X. Remling, *Urkündliche Gesch. d. ehemaligen Abteien u. Klöster in Rheinbayern* (Neustadt, 1836), I, 316). In 1352 the canons of Salisbury bought the patronage of Henney to increase the stipends of their vicars choral and choristers, and obtained papal permission to appropriate this living, valued at £40 a year (*Cal. Pap. Pet.* I, 235). Moreover, side by side with such cases as these two printed above, we find many where the modern conscience finds little justification for the transference of tithes from village to abbey. In 1263, when the abbey of Bec was burned, Urban IV addressed a command to all the parishes in the patronage of that house and its priories, bidding them contribute liberally to the rebuilding (*Chronique du Bec*, ed. Porée (1883), 37). In 1320 Kempen was appropriated to Gladbach because the abbey buildings were falling into ruin, and the monks had no money for the rebuilding (G. Eckertz, *M. Gladbach*, 163). In 1235 the abbey of St Georgen was burned down; the papal legate gave the monks leave to appropriate for three years the incomes of all parish churches in their patronage; in 1248 Innocent IV allowed them to do the same with ten of their churches (D. F. Cless, *Kulturgesch. v. Württemberg*, II, i, 281 n.). Again, "The county generally was so

wasted by the Black Death that the monks [of Worcester] could scarcely procure tenants to inhabit their desolate manors, and the monastery itself became partly ruinous, so that the pope was compelled to appropriate certain parsonages to help the fraternity in their distress" (Noake, *Mon. and Cath. of Worcs.* (1866), 95). In Fr Denifle's great collection of supplications to the pope during and after the Hundred Years' War, there are many of this sort. The canons of Elne are impoverished; they get leave to appropriate "some simple benefices, which men call *chaplaincies*"; so also the canons of Lodève, of Mague-lonne, of Momery, of Clermont. At Montpensier the canons get three fresh churches; a great abbey is allowed to swallow three others, provided they do not total more than 500 *livres tournois* (*La Désolation des Églises*, etc. 1 (Mâcon, 1887), 239-42, 255, 281, 284, 286. Other cases on pp. 314, 318, 320, 352 (2), 356, 397, 416, 421, 425, 432, 449, 455, and a whole batch on p. 584). In 1444 the chapter of Ste-Opportune at Paris falsely represented their revenues as enormously fallen, and obtained an appropriation of the Église des Innocents, which church they so neglected, to the great detriment of worship and religion, that the next pope revoked the incorporation in 1457 (*ibid.* p. 472). But no ordinary village church could have got a revocation of this kind. We have seen how easily false excuses might pass muster, and how much the ordinary parish had to suffer without hope of redress. Again, even when the original application of moneys taken from these parishes might be defensible or commendable, there was no security against gradual misapplication. In 1342 the Bishop of Norwich allowed the monks to appropriate West Riston church to the repairs of Norwich Cathedral; the monks took nearly half of the income (*i.e.* 6 marks, *minus* 6s. 8d. a year to the bishop for his services) and gave 6 marks to the vicar. By 1428 this income had come into the hands of the cellarer: *i.e.* it was probably diverted from the fabric fund to the monks' comforts (Blomefield's *Norfolk*, iv, 133: W. Riston). Here, again, is a flagrant case which shows the worst possibilities. In 1300 the bishop's visitation disclosed grave irregularities on the part of the prior of the cathedral monastery at Carlisle; he was found to be dishonest, an embezzler on a great scale, and negligent of discipline. After nearly five years, he was at last persuaded to resign by the offer of a good pension. Besides excellent lodgings in the monastery, raiment, food and drink for himself, a chaplain in waiting and two servants, and a carriage whenever he wished to visit his friends, he was to have 20 marks a year for the entertainment of his friends, since he was a man of good family. And these 20 marks—equivalent to the whole income of two or three poorly paid parish priests—were to be taken from the endowments of the parish of Langwathby, whose peasants sweated to pay for the ex-prior's comforts and pomp (*Reg. Halton, Cant. and York Soc.* (1913), i, 119, 224, and xxxii).

In the absence of anything like modern business control, such cases were far more frequent than is generally realized. On August 6, 1303, Archbishop Corbridge reported the great abbey of St Mary's, York, as

hopelessly indebted "perchance through default of proper governance hitherto, both in spiritual and in temporal matters": a similar report of a month earlier has no softening "perchance". On the following February 25, he licensed the monks to appropriate the rich church of Doncaster (*Reg. Corbridge*, Surtees Soc. (1925), 92, 96). The monks of Hickling appropriated the church of Palling at a time when they had enough ready money to purchase fresh tenements in two villages (Blomefield, *s.v. Hickling*). At the wealthy abbey of St-Ouen-de-Rouen, in [1130], the tithes of one village were appropriated to the sick monks, and another to the same purpose in [1140] (Pommeraye, 264). When the Worcester monks got hold of their richest church (Bromsgrove, £41 *p.a.*), this was "for the benefit of the soul of King John and the maintenance of their hospitality and care of the sick" (*Liber Pensionum*, 39). Christ Church, Canterbury, pleaded to the Bishop of Rochester for the appropriation of Westerham parish in 1327 on the grounds of their heavy losses by cattle-murrain and inundations of the sea, and increase of travellers on this regular Continental route during the recent political disturbances. The monks strongly resented the bishop's demand for more precise details, pleading that such proofs were not usually required in petitions for appropriation. The bishop looked into the case and granted the appropriation, taking 10s. as a yearly pension for his consent (*Lit. Cant.* 1, 243ff., 254, 265). Bishop Bateman of Norwich, the founder of Trinity Hall, provided for a Mass in perpetuity at his own cathedral to the succour of his soul. But he paid for this by appropriating the church of Fring; that is, by diverting something like £10 a year from that village to his own salvation (Wharton, 1, 414. The living was estimated at 18 marks in 1252, and the monks were drawing more than £12 for their own share under Henry VIII).

We may conclude with three German cases:

(1) *Reforming Statutes at Hornbach in 1318*. "Each member received into the abbey must be of noble birth on both sides; none may be received who has apostatized from the Order. At his entrance he must give the abbot two marks" with other similar money-bargains in flat defiance of the Rule and of papal decrees. Again: "He who allows himself to be betrayed into theft loses his vote in chapter through this shameful deed; if he be in lower orders he shall never be promoted to the higher; if in higher, he shall be promoted to no conventual office." The sympathetic modern historian continues: "Many misdeeds which hitherto reigned in the abbey were met by these provisions; but whether they could be really enforced in all their scope, and whether they were actually enforced, seems all the more doubtful that we find Abbot John shortly afterwards resigning his abbacy, which had apparently brought him more pain than joy" (F. X. Remling, *Urkundliche Gesch. d. ehemaligen Abteien u. Klöster in Rheinbayern* (Neustadt, 1836), 1, 314; cf. 71-2).

(2) Boniface IX, in 1394, allowed Murbach to appropriate four more churches. The abbey had become a refuge for nobly born younger sons, and was deeply in debt partly, no doubt, through wars but also through mismanagement; and, even under these pecuniary embarrassments, it had still enormous possessions in the background (Gatrio, I, 517).

(3) The historian of the abbey of Pfalzel notes that, "while the properties and revenues increased, discipline seems to have grown weaker"; then came even financial decay; and, in 1463, the Archbishop of Trier helped them out by allowing them to appropriate a parish church (*Eiflia Sacra*, II, 314).

The whole situation has been summed up impartially by Bishop W. H. Frere (*Church Quarterly Review*, LXXVI (July, 1913), 320): "The better monastic conscience had some qualms about the alienation. The Cistercians did not allow themselves to receive churches or tithes, and the reformed Premonstratensian canons did so only very little. This scruple, and its gradual disappearance, are well illustrated in our area. The twenty years from 1131 to 1150 saw a great enthusiasm for Cistercian foundations. Beginning with monks at Rivaulx and nuns at Swine, the movement produced nine or ten great foundations in those two decades. The house at Rivaulx remained at the end true to principle, and had no churches or tithes: but, in spite of papal remonstrances, the rest all broke down in more or less degree. Fountains, indeed, soon parted with its one Yorkshire church and retained only two outside the county. But both Meaux and Kirkstall profited in turn at the expense of the alien priory of Burstall, a dependency of the Norman Abbey of Albemarle: the former acquired four of its churches and the latter six.

"The case of Byland also deserves mention: for at its foundation it declined to accept three churches which the founder offered, and they were given accordingly to the canons of Newburgh instead. But later it possessed three or four.

"Thus the scruple did not survive. It was not shared at the time by the English order of Gilbertines, who took their proportion of parochial spoils; nor later even by all the friars, for we find the Trinitarians at Knaresborough in possession of three churches. Moreover, among monks, even the strict Carthusian Order felt no objection; and consequently the two Yorkshire Charterhouses of the Twelfth century, Hull and Mountgrace, had each its quota of appropriated churches."

TITHE-FARMING

The nuns of Jully were farming tithes as early as 1170; again, in 1231 and 1316 (*Jully*, 222, 277, 304). The first and third of these leases were to laymen. In 1219, the church of Bampton (Oxon) had been let out to farm from time immemorial by the Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, to whom it was appropriated (*Rotuli Hugonis de Welles*, I, 129). One of the most striking instances is quoted by G. Oliver, on p. 133 of his

Monasticon Dioc. Exon. (1046). It runs as follows: "Among the leases of church property made by Howe before the surrender, we find the following among the muniments and title-deeds [of Plympton Priory] at Powderham Castle. The tithes of Wembury leased for twenty-one years to John Ryder of Wembury for the rent of £40. 13s. 4d., deducting £6. 13s. 4d. towards the salary of the incumbent. The tithes of S. Budok to Thomas Whithede and Robert Kemp for twenty-five years; rent £9. The tithes of S. Julian of Maker to Walter Shere for twenty-five years; rent £11. 6s. 8d.; of Maristowe and Thrusselton to Edmund Langeford, for twenty-one years, rent £8; of Brixton for twenty-one years to Richard Chalons and Walter Shere, rent £30, deducting £6. 13s. 4d. for the incumbent's salary. The tithes of Plymouth to Richard Hoper, for twenty-one years, for £15; for the like term to the same Hoper, the tithes of Eggbuckland, for £9; of Tamerton Folyett, for £10; and of S. Martin's chapel, in Tamerton Foliot parish, for 13s. 4d. The tithes of Sandforde to Thomas Whitehede, for twenty-five years, rent £9. 6s. 8d.; deducting therefrom £6 for the incumbent. Tithes of S. Edward's of Shaugh to Hugh Foster and Baldwin Heyle, for twenty-five years, rent £20, deducting therefrom £6. 13s. 4d. for the resident curate. The tithes and oblations of S. Thomas's (afterwards called S. Maurice's) of Plympton east, with the exception of the tithe garb and theaf, to Richard Chalons and Walter Shere, for thirty-five years, rent £11; out of which was to be deducted, as a salary for the curate, £6. 13s. 4d. The tithes and oblations of All Saints at Plymstock to Walter Shere and Christopher Hornebrooke, for twenty-five years; rent £62; £8 of which to be deducted for the curate's stipend. The tithes, great and small, of S. Mary's of Plymton to Richard Chalons and Walter Shere, for twenty-one years; rent £74; of which £16 to be deducted for the maintenance of two priests, viz. the parish priest and the (sacristan) sexton. The tithes of S. Kew in Cornwall to Richard Fortescue, esq. and his son Humphrey, for twenty-five years; rent £20." Plympton, with an income of £912 a year, was one of the richest of all English Augustinian houses. (*Theaf* is a yearling ewe.)

In 1445 the Hospitallers of Clerkenwell were paying their vicar at Burham 12 marks a year, and leaving him to support all the parish burdens, which reduced his income to 8 marks net: his manse was badly situated, far from his parishioners, and so ruinous that £10 would not repair it. In 1509 we find them farming the whole thing out; they received a yearly £13. 6s. 8d. net, as a man takes his modern dividends, and washed their hands of the parish. Similarly, in 1526, they let out their "parsonage of Tonbridge" to a layman who was to get what he could from the parish, bear all expenses, and pay a clear rent of £14 per annum to the Religious. Here they were flying in the face of Canon Law; yet we find frequent breaches elsewhere of this prohibition against farming church revenues to laymen. The Finchale monks did so with their church of Giggleswick; so did the Norman monks of Troarn; so, again, did German monks. Monastic irregularities were more frequent in Scotland than in England. Here again is a Scottish

case. In 1472 the Abbot of Dunfermline farmed out the parsonage of Stirling on a nineteen years' lease, at £50 a year, *plus* four chaldrons of meal, to Matthew Forster, burgher of Stirling. Matthew paid £450 down, as his first nine years' rent, and thus apparently redeemed the payment of meal. In 1479 the lease was renewed for a further nineteen years, and Matthew paid down for the first four years, £200. In 1561 it was still farmed out at a clear rental to themselves. A very interesting case is that of Kinross in 1318, where the monks, having procured the appropriation to take effect at the incumbent's death, bought him out at once with a pension of 100 marks for life, or nearly ten times an average vicar's income. For other references of tithes farmed see Blomefield's *Norfolk* under *Old Buckenham* (Griston) and *Thetford* (St Sepulchre's); Lunt, 66, 134, 141, 151, 176 [210, 211, 319, 365, 394, 482]; *Reg. Stapledon*, 343 (1317); *Ely Dioc. Rem.* (1901), 123; *C.P.L.* vi, 310; vii, 436; Savine, 112; *Lyre*, 285; *Eiflia Sacra*, i, 604; *Revue Mabillon*, xxi (1931), 94.

FURTHER REFERENCES

I have noted references to the relations between monks and parishes on the following pages of Dugdale-Caley: i, 144, 335, 377, 575; ii, 104, 420, 430 note *e*, 498, 633; iii, 42, 63, 64, 91, 108, 304, 441, 475, 493, 538, 568, 587, 613; iv, 446, 462, 510, 653; v, 7, 78, 132, 145, 351, 373, 415, 429, 457, 484, 585, 603 *a*, 693; vi, 127. Others will be found in *Reg. Malmesb.* R.S. i, 398; ii, 393; *Reg. Halton*, C. and Y.S. ii, 203; *Reg. Baldock*, C. and Y.S. 123; *Salt Collections*, i, 251, 264, 269, 275-6, 282-3; viii, 104, 142 (2); Peckham, R.S. 129, 380; ii, lxxv, 480, 506, 624, 726, 903, 904; *Bon-Port*, 152, 314, 398, 406; Power, 209 *b*; Turner-Salter, 501, 537, 554, 556, 566; *Dives and Pauper*, vii, 14 *ad fin.*; Riegger, *Amoen.* 113; *XIX Cent.* Sept. 1927, p. 400; Wilkins, iii, 65; Van Espen, 817, §§ 5ff.; *C.P.P.* i, 534; Steph. Tornac, *Ep.* 200, *P.L.* cxxi, col. 482; Alvarus, 129 *d*; *Tudor Studies*, 68; Winter, iii, 27, 28; *Studien und Mittheilungen*, 236; Nider (Joh.), *De Ref. Relig.* 254; Trithemius, *Chronicon Hirsaugiense*, 573; Martène, *Voy. Lit.* 5, 92, 108; ii, 13; Arx, i, 463-6; Bozon, 26; Loos, 32, 86; *Prémontré*, 71; *Gladbach*, 74; *Belbuck*, 21, 23; *Aube* (1906), 163, 165, 167, 189; Grandisson, iii, p. lxxvii; Delisle, 405-7; Fleming and Gray, 78; Sée, *Bretagne*, 82; *Cava*, 26, 162, 257, lxxix; *Domène*, 139; Berlière, *Honorius*, 481; Jacquin, 67; *Five Cent. of Relig.* i, 388-9, cf. 266, 423, 429, 457; *Coldingham*, i, 26, 30, 40; Wadding, *an.* 1254, iii, 1254; *An. Dunstable*, R.S. 279, 329; Alnwick, 58, 80, 170, 179; Jocelin Brakelond, C.S. 46-7; L. Delisle, *Classe Agric.* (1903), 406, 411, 412; Buonanoma, 43 (1387); *Orval*, 346, 689; *Rot. Parl.* iv, 290 (1425); *Reg. St Bees*, 369-70, 387, 394; Maillet-Guy, *Paroisses*, 26; *Eiflia Sacra*, i, 574; Van Lokeren, pt. i, 163, 211; pt. ii, 44 (1285); *ibid.* 53 (1315); Wyard, 154; Birch, *Margam*, 203; *C.P.L.* v, 545 (Peterborough, 1402); *Aurillac*, ii, 86; *Reg. Corbridge*, ii, p. xxxiv; *Mon. Boica*, xv (1782), 81 (Ingolstadt, 1407); Affarosi, i, 156; W. Hudson in *Norf. Archaeol.* xvii (1908), 78-9.

CHAPTER XII

STARVATION OF VICARS

The Council of Cognac, in 1260 (§ 11), deplores "that in this province there are certain poor priests in the churches under monastic patronage; therefore we decree that, within a month after warning given by the diocesan bishop, these patrons give the priests a certain definite portion of their goods, to the value of at least fifteen *livres* a year". Nearly two centuries later, we get the same complaint from perhaps the greatest Churchman of that age: "Note the application of tithes to monasteries or collegiate churches, so that the parsons are reduced to poverty, and treat of the remedy which should be applied" (Gerson, *Opp.* iv, 439). A little later than Gerson, strong evidence comes from the *Register* of Abbot Whethamstede at St Albans. The editor writes (ii, p. xxxii): "The frequent shiftings also from the abbey livings, as disclosed in these Registers, cannot fail to elicit remark; and indeed, as shewing, if no worse, at least a tendency to trifle with things that—among ecclesiastics, more especially—ought to have been looked upon as of the nature of a sacred trust, they have anything but a satisfactory look. The Vicarage of Abbot's Langley, for example, falls vacant by resignation no less than six times in the course of nineteen years. To the Rectory of Brantfelde, in Hertfordshire, in the Abbot's patronage, there are no fewer than eight presentations in twenty-three years; three of the vacancies however having been caused by death. Of the parish of Idelestre (now Elstree), in Bedfordshire, in the Abbot's gift,¹ there seem to have been nine successive Rectors in the short space of sixteen years. The parish of Leecheworthe (now Letchworth) in Bedfordshire is mentioned as receiving at the hands of the Abbot, its patron, either five or six successive Rectors in fourteen years. Of the parish of Shepehale (now known as Shephall near Stevenage), the Vicarage of which is mentioned as being at first in the gift of the Abbot of St Alban's, and afterward in that of the Prior and Convent of Wallingford, five Vicars are named in the course of six years. Many instances also of merely monetary presentations are to be found among these entries; as in the case of Brantfelde (pp. 101, 102) for example."

The Wymondham monks, as Blomefield shows, had an appropriated church in the thirteenth century which was worth 120 marks, yet they paid only 13 to their vicar. From Happisburgh they took 53 marks, and gave the vicar 5. At Coxford, not far off, the brethren appropriated a rectory of 20 marks and gave 5 to the vicar. Close by, again, Creak had the rectory of Gateley (26 marks) and gave the vicar 6. Horseford All-Saints was appropriated to Horsham priory: it was

¹ Possibly, however, there may have been in this instance a wrong entry, cf. pp. 118, 121, 122, 168.

case work out at 251 marks in come for the
churches, of which only 87 marks went to the
curate: thus the appropriators took over 85%.

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worth 20 marks, and the vicar got 6. In 1456 the parishioners began to build a new tower; in 1493 "the bishop granted the messengers of this village power to ask alms of the citizens and through the diocese of Norwich for the repair and building of the church and tower". This was the time at which the whole steeple might have been built with the moneys which the priory drew every two years from the parish. The monks of St Benet's had Horning Church (12 marks) and gave the vicar 2. These are all the cases I happen to have noted where parallel figures may be gathered for Norfolk from this laborious historian.

The *pouillé* of the diocese of Coutances in 1332, though it does not clearly distinguish between the parishes where the monasteries had simply the patronage and those which they had actually appropriated, shows very plainly how complicated the arrangements often were, and how much room there might be for dispute in every case. And, though it may not record the full amount drawn by the monks from these parishes, yet what it does show is very considerable. The first two deaneries contain thirty-four churches; in two of these all of the great tithes went away from the parish to the monks; in two cases two-thirds of the great tithes were thus diverted; in two others, half, in one, a third; in three other cases of monastic patrons smaller dues were taken. From one parish (Savigny) the amount thus taken by the monks is estimated at 120 *livres* a year (*i.e.* the price of about 120 cows) (A. Longnon, *Pouillés de Prov. de Rouen* (1903), 270ff.).

Archbishop Zouch of York, in 1344, found the monks of St Mary's "detaining, contrary to common law, and receiving *de facto* the fruits revenues and incomes, of [certain] churches and chapels, and disposing of the same at their own will". The number had evidently startled the bishop, who, however, while recording them all (they fill two folio columns), notes that the monks had shown papal and archiepiscopal confirmations and other sufficient documentary vouchers for their actual property in these spiritual revenues (Dugdale-Caley, III, 565-6).

In 1448, the Archbishop of Canterbury had to intervene in the case of Birling, appropriated to the monks of Bermondsey, who had drawn a profit of £10 a year from the parish in 1291, and were probably drawing considerably more by now. They paid their vicar only £4. 15s. 8d., upon which he had to support himself and certain parish burdens as best he could; they had also let his manse become so dilapidated that it would cost £20 to repair. They could easily afford, reckoned the archbishop, to allow their vicar 20 marks for the "no small cure of souls" that fell upon him; yet they had long neglected all warnings: it was only after legal proceedings that the monks allowed the vicar an extra 8 marks—total £10. 2s. 4d. (*Reg. Roff.* 171). This lends all the more force to an almost contemporary letter from a vicar to his patron, the prior of Canterbury Cathedral. It is worth noting that this priest writes to this monk not in Latin, but in such English as he can muster: "To the Right Reverend and Worshipfull Fader in God the Priour of Cristichurch in Caunterbery. Humbly besechith your pouer Chapeleyn and continuall oratour Thomas Walton, Viker of the

parissh church of Bersted, for that the parissh ther by longe continuance ys falle in decay, and by diverse meanes gretly enpoveryesed, so that diverse places in the same parissh, suche as ii or iii of theym were used to be worth to the Curat there xx. s. by the yere, stande nowe voyde and be not worth to him in thies dayes iii. s. iiiii. d. in the yere. In so moche that the costes and charges of reparacion of the seid vikerage, costes and wages also in mete drynk and clothing of his servant by the yere to the value of xl. s. forthwith costs uppon the Deen in thyme of visitacion, with all suche other charges as perterteyneth to his seid chyrch clerely considered and acquitted, the residewe of the verray valoure of the seid chyrch and vikerage extendith scarsly to the sume of v. mark by the yere. And where as he was used to have the chapell of Bognore there to in peas hoole to hym self for to serve, so myght he lyve, but than he sange twyse uppon the day, the which was ageynst conscience; but sithen hit hath be devyded bitwene the chantry prest of Pagham and hym, by the labour and gret favour of Maister Eyon Deen of Pagham, wherby your seid pouer oratour and chapeleyn ys put to poverte and set in grete distresse. Please hit therfor your moste gracious Lordship to provyde for me of sufficient lyvyng to the chirch of Bersted, so that y may leave the laboure to Bognore, and abide uppon Bersted nowe in my gret age and debilite, for the love of God and yn the way of charite" (*Lit. Cant.* R.S. III, 240).

This section, again, may conclude with some remarks from Bishop W. H. Frere (*Church Quarterly Review*, LXXVI, 327): "We can see also specimen transactions which shew the gain to the owner, and the loss to the parish, when the system of appropriation takes the place of the plan of pension. In 1229 Archbishop Gray confirmed the pensions which Pontefract derived from seven of its churches: from four of these it received in all 40 marks. Later, when they were appropriated, while the vicars received unusually good salaries, the convent gained nearly 300 marks or 200*l.* per annum. One of the seven still remained on the pension system, but it paid double as much as before. Similarly Nostel from two of its churches got 140 marks instead of 35.

"We may compare with these an instance of later date. The parish of Hutton Bushell was paying to Whitby at the end of the fourteenth century a pension of 2*l.* The two moieties into which the church was divided were each appropriated to the Abbey in 1453; and eighty years later the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* values the Abbey's income from the church at 15*l.* 10*s.* This shews how the transfer from the old pension-system to the later appropriation remained to the end a profitable change for the appropriator."

ORDINATION OF A VICARAGE IN 1154

"In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, Amen. I Godfrey, by God's mercy Bishop of Langres, make known to all present and future that, at the prayers of Our beloved son Stephen, Abbot of Molesme, and of his brethren, I have consecrated the altar of the

parish chapel built within the cemetery of that abbey, wherein I have established and decreed what the monks should receive and what the priest, to be kept firmly between the two parties and to be possessed by each in perpetuity. Therefore, of all oblations which are offered throughout the year at the said altar, of whatever kind, the priest shall have the third part and the monks two-thirds; and whatsoever all folk at their death may leave to the church for their own salvation, the priest shall have one and the monks two thirds. Likewise in charitable gifts made in any way to the priest by his parishioners, and in trentals and confession-money and nuptial benedictions, and in the priest's procurations as often as they are redeemed, and in all that they receive for infants dying after baptism in their chrism-cloths, the priest shall have one-third and the monks two. In benedictions of pilgrims' wallets, and offerings made by them, the priest and monks shall share equally, and in their last testaments the priest shall have one, the monks two parts. I have also ordained and decreed that the priest shall never present the corpse in this chapel; but he shall take it from the dead man's house and present it at the abbey church; the monks shall sing Mass for him and bury him. Moreover, if any man on his deathbed beg to be made monk, he shall first make his last testament before the priest; then the priest shall give him over to the monks to be monachized, and the priest shall have no part in whatsoever he may give unto them; on the other hand, the monks shall have two parts of his bequest. In tithes of vineyards and corn the monks shall have eight parts and the priest the ninth. Whenssoever movables are given [to the chapel], the priest shall have the third part and the monks two-thirds; on the other hand if land be given, or meadows or vineyards, these shall be the monks' property, nor shall the priest have aught thereof." Excommunication is pronounced against all who gainsay this award (*Reg. Molesme*, II, 267).

APPROPRIATION AND POOR-RELIEF

The Apologetic view may best be set forth in a quotation from Cardinal Gasquet: "As already pointed out, every rector and vicar throughout England not only regarded himself in theory as a steward of the *panis Dominicus* (the Lord's Bread), under which name was meant charity to all that came to claim support; but if the laws of the English Church and Lyndwood's authoritative gloss mean anything whatever, this sacred duty was carried out in practice. Wherever rectors do not reside in the place of their cures, says Archbishop Peckham, they are bound to keep proctors or agents to exercise proper hospitality or charity as far as the means of their churches will allow, and at the very least to relieve every parishioner in extreme necessity; and the gloss adds that the rector of a church on the high-road and in a frequented place will obviously have to spend much more than one whose cure lies off the beaten track. For this reason, it says, the clergy of the churches in England *are well endowed*, especially where the calls

upon them for this hospitality are great" (*Parish Life in Medieval England*, 8). The words I have here italicized are very different from Lyndwood's, whose actual words are "*ought to be better endowed*", thus implying not satisfaction but dissatisfaction with the actual state of affairs. The mistranslation, therefore, strikes at the very root of the matter: our question is not one of theories, of counsels of perfection, but of facts. Reading further, we find (p. 86): "From the earliest days of English Christianity the care of the helpless poor was regarded as an obligation incumbent on all; and in 1342 Archbishop Stratford, dealing with *appropriations*, or the assignment of ecclesiastical revenue to the support of some religious house or college, ordered that a portion of the tithe should always be set apart for the relief of the poor, because, as Bishop Stubbs has pointed out, in England, from the days of King Ethelred, 'a third part of the tithe' which belonged to the Church was the acknowledged birthright of the poorer members of Christ's flock. All the old diocesan registers of English sees afford like instances of specific injunctions as to bestowing part of the income of the benefice on the poor when appropriations were granted." Here, again, the careful reader will note (1) that there is no appeal to a single concrete case where anything like that proportion of the tithes can be shown to have been actually earmarked for the poor; and (2) that the repetition of these injunctions, at different places and times, affords rather a presumption of neglect than of fulfilment. But, thirdly, if my text has not already shown it with sufficient plainness, I must add here a few more concrete cases to prove that here, as in so many other places, Cardinal Gasquet's apologetic zeal has tempted him to write not from patiently collected documentary evidence, but from imagination. I exposed these careless falsifications of the actual evidence in *The Contemporary Review* for June and July, 1907 (reprinted for the third time in my *Ten Medieval Studies*, 1930, p. 162). No attempt, so far as I know, has ever been made to meet these exposures.

The monks of Canterbury Cathedral complained bitterly of Archbishop Theobald, who took from them four churches which had been earmarked for the almonry. But Theobald was an earnest monastic reformer, of irreproachable character, and it is inconceivable that he should have done anything here to rob the poor. It is far more probable that he distrusted the monks' expenditure of this money, just as he certainly mistrusted their personal extravagance in the employment of other endowments (Bishop Stubbs in Preface to *Memorials of Richard I*, R.S. II; *Gervase of Canterbury*, R.S. I, 35, 48, 332; II, 399; Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, I, 8). St Peter's abbey, Shrewsbury, was licensed by the pope in 1463 to appropriate a church valued in the petition at £10 a year: such valuations were usually under the mark. "The bishop reserves pensions from the abbot and convent, by way of compensation, of 13s. 4d. to himself and his successors, 6s. 8d. to each of the prior and chapter of Coventry and the dean and chapter of Lichfield, and to the archdeacon of the place 3s. 4d., to be paid at Michaelmas; and provides for the yearly distribution by the abbot and convent of 6s. 8d.

from the fruits of the said church to its poor parishioners within a month after every feast of the Annunciation" (*C.P.L.* xi, 479). One of the most favourable cases I have met was at Saillans, where the parish church was appropriated to the priory. The prior "was bound to give half-a-pound of bread daily to every pauper; and, beyond these alms, he distributed twelve *setiers* of wheat yearly to the needy in Saillans" (*Aurillac*, II, 125). In (1379?) the king allowed Esholt to appropriate a church with provision for the poor "according to the statute proclaimed and provided for that matter" (*Dugdale-Caley*, v, 472: but the date is wrong if, as the words imply, Richard referred to the Statute of 1391). That statute had been enacted at the petition of the Commons, who in that year and earlier, in 1365, had complained of the cessation of alms through appropriations. The king enacted that the diocesan should, in each case, fix a certain proportion for charity: my text has shown how small that proportion usually was. But here and there we see that the statute did work some improvement. Bishop Rede of Chichester, in 1399, referred to it explicitly (*Register*, Sussex Record Soc. VIII (1908), 166). Before giving his consent to a monastic double-appropriation, he wrote: "There is no mention, however, made of any sum to be distributed according to the exigency of the said royal letters and the form of the statute thereon among the poor parishioners of Alfriston and Fleching. Accordingly we, Robert, the aforesaid Bishop of Chichester, Diocesan of the Churches aforesaid, considering that the same Church of A. is at present occupied by Sir William Everle, and the Church of F. by Sir John Crowche, Rectors Incumbent in the same Churches and that the said union, appropriation, etc., are not yet existing in fact, and wishing that all and each of the things specified in the aforesaid royal letters should be carried out according to the exigency and tenor of the same royal letters, by our ordinary authority appoint, order and decree, also with the consent and assent of the aforesaid Prior and Convent, that on the cession of decease or canonical removal or dismissal of the aforesaid incumbents, and when the said Prior, etc., have entered and taken corporal possession of the said Churches so incorporated, etc., or at least one of them, from that time the said Prior and Convent... on Christmas Day each year shall cause to be paid and distributed really and effectually the sum of 30 shillings in money or in grain out of the fruits, etc., of the same Churches, etc., among the poor parishioners of the said Churches who are most needy, in aid of their life and support, namely 15s. among the poor of Alfriston and 15s. among the poor of Fletching, which sum, considering the abilities of the said Churches and weighing all the circumstances, we think sufficient. In testimony of all which things we have ordered our seal to be affixed." Fifteen shillings would, of course, be only a very small fraction of the total parish income.

Dr Wood-Legh, who has made an intensive study of this subject for the reigns of Edward III and Richard II, sends me the following summary of her conclusions: "To what extent the statute introduced an innovation in practice, it is not easy to decide. The royal licences for

appropriations which were issued before 1391, contain no mention of the vicar or of the poor parishioners, but it was probably assumed that when an appropriation was made, the ecclesiastical law providing that a perpetual vicarage should be ordained would be enforced. It is certain at any rate, that when once a perpetual vicarage had been established, the cure of souls could not be transferred to the appropriators without violating the Statute of Mortmain and consequently royal licences for the appropriation of vicarages occur on the Patent Rolls (for an example of this, see *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1350-54, p. 102). The clause relating to the poor parishioners was much more original. I have found one instance, dating from the reign of Edward III, in which an appropriating monastery, Winchcombe, provided for the parishioners of an appropriated church, Enstone, in a way similar to that laid down in the statute (*Landboc sive Registrum Monasterii de Winchelcumba*, ed. David Royce, II, p. lxiv), and it may be that other monasteries made like arrangements. But in such cases, the assistance to the poor was given voluntarily and, until 1391, it was enforceable neither by the ecclesiastical nor the civil power.

"On the whole, the statute of 1391, and particularly the clause requiring an annual distribution to the poor parishioners, seems to have been treated seriously, at least by the laity. During the remaining years of the reign, royal licences were issued for the appropriation of seventy-eight benefices. In forty-five of these, provisions both for the vicar and for the poor are mentioned; in two other licences relating to the appropriation of rectories, the distribution to the poor is mentioned, [though nothing is said as to how the churches were to be served;] and in nine other cases, in which the appropriating Religious were to have the cure of souls of the parishioners, it was required that a fit sum of money should be distributed annually among the poor of the parishes. It is true that in eleven licences for the appropriation of vicarages, the poor were not mentioned, and that eleven licences for the appropriation of rectories or portions of rectories contain no reference either to poor or vicar. But these omissions may not have been made deliberately, and it is possible that when the actual appropriations took place the conditions of the statute were fulfilled. Thus in December, 1397, the monastery of Eynsham was granted a licence of the type in use before 1391 for the appropriation of the parish churches of Stoke Abbot's, Newenton Jeuell, and Combe, but a year later, another licence was issued, by which Eynsham was allowed to appropriate the same three churches, but this time on condition that the vicars were sufficiently endowed and that an annual distribution was made to the poor parishioners (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1396-99, pp. 361-464). Moreover, in two instances, [those of the appropriations of Wodehalle to the monastery of Kyrkested, and of St Sampson's, York, to the vicars of York Cathedral (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1391-96, pp. 231, 386)], special clauses granting exemption from compliance with the statute were obtained as a result of petitions presented in parliament. The reasons which the appropriators gave in pleading for these exemptions were, in both

cases, that as the churches were of small value the appropriators would have little or nothing left for themselves if they had to provide for a vicar and the poor. Exceptions of this kind which show the system of appropriations in its worst aspect would, of course, render the statute ineffective in some of the cases where its provisions were most needed, but the fact that it was thought necessary to secure exemptions from fulfilling its requirements is a strong indication that it was generally enforced. Moreover, in these cases where royal licence was given for the complete absorption of a vicarage, and the serving of that church by a member of the appropriating religious community, the precautions taken show anxiety on the part of the civil authorities to remind the religious of their legal liabilities for maintenance of their own parochial poor" (compare Hartridge, 157-9).

The York case referred to by Dr Wood-Legh is so significant that I must print the documents in full (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, A.D. 1394, p. 386). Here we find: "Grant in frank almain, to the college of 36 vicars in the cathedral church of St Peter, York—in consideration of their pious purpose to resume living together, and keeping common house in their hall by the cemetery of the said church, as originally established, and not separately as they have repeatedly done, and to celebrate the obit of the king and queen yearly and chant an antiphon and a collect of St John the Baptist daily immediately after compline before his altar or image in the said church—of the advowson of St Sampson's, York, in aid of their maintenance." This was on March 1; but next we read (March 4): "Exemption—reciting the foregoing licence, with the assent of the present Parliament, of the said vicars and their successors, forever, from compliance with the provisions of the statute of the Parliament of the fifteenth year requiring, in all appropriations of a parish church, the diocesan to ordain the yearly distribution of a sufficient sum from the fruits of the church among the poor parishioners and a suitable endowment for a vicar; in consideration of the large number of the said vicars, who would gain but small advantage from the appropriation; and grant that they may find a sufficient hired chaplain (*capellandum conducticium*) at their pleasure from time to time to serve and minister there in place of a vicar, according to the ordinance of the diocesan." And finally (June 16, 1396): "Declaration and order—on information that although the vicars of the cathedral church of St Peter, York, have by virtue of the king's grant and licence, which are recited, appropriated the church of St Sampson in that city, and keep their house in common, yet some of them, seeking their private advantage, attempt to apply certain sums of money derived from the revenues of that church to their own use for the time of their absence from the common table on such days and times when they happen of their own choice to be at the table of the canons residentiary or others by custom of the church of York or otherwise—that they shall henceforth receive nothing in money or otherwise for such times of absence, but that the profit arising thereby shall accrue to the common household expenses of the vicars living there in common."

MONKS AND CHURCH OR CHAPEL BUILDING

A document of St-Père-de-Chartres, about A.D. 1080, throws an interesting sidelight on the monks' dealings with the parish churches. The monks of St-Père had bought the church of [Crot] from those of Marmoutier, "with the consent of the three brothers whose heritage it was and who had sold it to Marmoutier—to wit, Harold Richard and Bernard—and of the over-lords of these three brothers. But, seeing that neediness goeth ever lame, Harold, under pressure of poverty and against our will, oftentimes kept the revenues of the church to his own uses, under pretext that it had been part of the agreement that we should [re]build the said church with stone and mortar." At length, after many excommunications and half-repentances and absolutions, Harold made complete submission before the altar of St-Père, and undertook "that, from that day forth, he would never lay any claim against us for that church, nor enforce any customary service from it or the land thereunto appertaining, nor take any toll of the corn which shall be stored therein, as he hath hitherto taken, but leave us henceforth in as free possession of this church as of those of St-Georges and St-Cyr" (*Cart. St-Père*, 558. I have given elsewhere several other cases of corn stored in churches, and Guérard in his note quotes three ecclesiastical decrees testifying to the prevalence of this abuse).

Julien Havet prints an interesting document illustrating the custom that, in a new parish, the inhabitants were compelled to bear the cost of constructing the church, while the patron was bound only to the upkeep. In 1230, the village of Besmont in north France disputed the question with the monks of Bucilly, the patrons. The original church, hastily built, was now "insufficiens"; it must be rebuilt; was this rebuilding to be at the villagers' cost or at that of the monks? It was submitted to arbitrators, who gave judgement in favour of the monastery (Julien Havet, *Œuvres*, II (1896), 187). The monastery of St Frideswide at Oxford recorded: "These are the chapels which have been built by consent of the canons of St Frideswide; those of Headington and Marston... St Clement's, Elsefield... There are other chapels also which from of old have belonged to the said monastery" (*Cart. Oseney*, II, 234). On this subject, Professor A. Hamilton Thompson sums up (*The Architect*, Aug. 30, 1912, p. 218): "We find again and again in guide books and in attractive books for tourists allusions made to the monks who built the parish churches, or to the generous emulation of abbeys which owned advowsons or appropriated rectories in the work of erecting churches in which they were thus interested. As a fact, monks did not obtain licence to convert the great tithes of parishes to their own use in order that they might spend the proceeds in building churches. Where they were lords of the manor, as the abbot and convent of Peterborough were at Polebrook, they took their part in providing the nave, and may have built it at their own expense. Where, as at Castor, they were both lords of the manor and rectors, their

responsibility to the fabric was larger. Where, as at Geddington, they were merely rectors, they were bound to the upkeep of the chancel, but generally arranged the vicar's stipend so that he came in for his substantial fraction of the expense. Their attitude to their responsibilities in this respect was—and no practical archaeologist who knows the value of money will blame them—as cold and critical as that of their legal successor, the average lay rector of to-day. The abbot and convent of Croyland were forced in 1383 to repair the decayed chancel of Wellingborough: the chancel of the fine church of Harringworth bears evidence, in the hasty and inferior masonry of its upper walls, of the desire of the abbess and convent of Elstow to save as much as they could of the money which they were obliged to spend on a church which none of them had probably seen. The visitations of religious houses by Bishop Alnwick, as reported by his secretary Colstone, contain many references to the decay of the chancels of appropriated churches. And these facts, although they are familiar to many, are in danger of being forgotten. Of the churches of the Nene valley, the majority at the time when most of the present fabrics were built were served by rectors, while the manors were largely held by laymen. The splendour of most of these fabrics must be put down to the munificence of rectors such as Richard de Het and lay-folk such as Henry de Bray; to the combined action, as at Lowick, of John de Heton, the rector, and Ralph Greene, the squire; to the wealth of such merchants as John Pyel, the founder of the college of Irthlingborough.”

CHAPTER XIII

NEGLECT OF APPROPRIATED PARISHES

In 1301 Dorchester abbey had obtained episcopal permission to serve its appropriated church of Pishill by one of its own brethren “but even this was not adhered to, and in 1356 the lord of Pishill and the inhabitants, ‘parishioners of the church, chapel, or perpetual chantry of Pishill’, were conducting a case against the abbot and convent of Dorchester to secure a resident chaplain at the expense of the canons, as was due” (*V.C.H. Oxon*, II, 88). Here, again, is a case in 1391. The pope writes “To the prior of Lanthony near Gloucester Mandate to license a cemetery to be dedicated for the parishioners of St Helen’s, Abingdon, in the diocese of Salisbury. The recent petition of the vicar, Henry Bryt, and parishioners, containing that the church has had no cemetery of its own for want of a fitting ground, and that funerals are taken into the monastery of Abingdon, to which the church is appropriated, the vicar, however, taking the whole of the dues; that the abbot and convent are annoyed because those who follow the funerals make a great tumult and hinder divine worship, to the great

prejudice of the vicar and parishioners, for the monks do not allow the office of the dead to be said in the monastery; and that lately when the vicar had celebrated the office of the dead in the said parish church, the monks caused the monastery doors to be shut, and refused the body burial for about three days and nights; moreover, the said gates being carelessly kept not shut, pigs have got into the cemetery and dug up corpses; the monks, likewise, without consent of friends and executors, remove, sell, and appropriate to their own use the costly tombstones. The proposed cemetery is contiguous to the parish church, and is enclosed by a stone wall" (*C.P.L.* IV, 371 (1391)). Here, again, a few years later (1435): "To the dean of Salisbury. Mandate, at the recent petition of John Hay, rector of Hampreston in the diocese of Salisbury—containing that the bodies of its parishioners are by ancient custom buried in the collegiate church of Wymborne Meynster, called a free chapel, but that, on account of the distance of the said parish church from the said collegiate church, two English miles, sometimes, especially in winter, during floods, the said bodies are not buried within four days and more; and adding that if the said bodies were buried in the said parish church or its cemetery it would be a great relief to the said parishioners—if he find the facts to be so, and after the said parishioners have made a fitting compensation to the said collegiate church, to grant to the said rector and parishioners licence to have the said parish church and its cemetery consecrated by a catholic bishop, and to have buried in them the bodies of all the said parishioners" (*C.P.L.* VIII, 505). When Clement VII, in 1524, dissolved the decayed nunnery of Lillechurch and transferred its endowments to St John's College, Cambridge, there were only three nuns in the convent, and it enjoyed the appropriation of five parish churches (Dugdale-Caley, IV, 383).

APPROPRIATION AND ABSENTEEISM

(P.R.O. *Chantry Proceedings*, C. I, Bundle 47, no. 76: transcript kindly supplied by the late Dr R. A. R. Hartridge; cf. p. 179 of his book.)

"To the reverend' fader in God' and' gode and' gracious lord' the Bisshop of Rochestie Chaunceller of England'.

"Mekely beseceth your good and gracious Lordshepe Joh'n Skyenner of the pariche of' Heigham in the Comite of Suff' and in the diocese of Norwiche that where as Thomas Gondolf' Priour of the Priorie of the Holy Trynite of Gippeswiche callid Chryrchurche of Hyperwiche and a parson' impersoné of the parich Chyrche of Heigham beforesaid' and oldyth' the same [in] propre use, and for' lake and in defaut of findings of parich prest there to do and kepe divine services and ther to minstre the sacrament' of holy chyrche to the parichiens of the same, as the seid [Priour] of rig'th and dewte owith' to have do, your' seid[e] supplicaunt and othir' parichiens of the same compleyned them to the officeres of ther righth honorabyll' and good' lord' the Bysshop'

of Norwyche, Ordinary of the same chyrche, and on' that behalfe requyng' them' to provyde an' honest Prest to serue the seid Chyrche. Where upon the seid Officeris of the seid Bysshop' in ade to your seid supplicant' and other' wryting undir the seid' ordinaries seall' to sequester' and take such greynes and offerynges as [*illegible*] grewe on the seid parsonage and ther' wyth' do fynd[e a] prest ther' to kepe the seid' cure. Where upon' your' supplicaunt prouyded a prest and executyd the seid auctoryte. Wherefor the seid Priour', of malice, ageyn trough'e and consciens, hath' affermed a pleynt of trespase agens't your seid' supplicant before the Bayles of the seid' town' of [H]ippeswiche, where the seid Priour is most stronge and dweller', and your supplicaunt a straunger and also nevir dide eny trespase or offence to the seid Priour' in the seid towne nor wythin' the ffraunchise of the same, and the seid towne of Heigham is from the seid towne of [H]ippeswiche viij miles [? carg.?] And therefore [*two words inserted above line illegible*] please your' good and gracious lordship' the premisses to consider', and to graunt a wrytt of *Certiorare*, to be retornable before the kyng' our souerayn' lord' in his Chauncery at a certeyn day by yow to be lymytted, and be directe to the seid baylees of [H]ippeswiche to Certifie and [remove and] bring before you unto the seid' Chauncerie the seid pleynt and all the cyrcumstraunces of the same, ther' to be examined as treugh't and consciens requyreth at the reuerens of god' and in the way of' Charyte."

The frequency of such neglect may be measured by the petition of the Commons to the King in 1425 (*Rot. Parl.* iv, 290): "Please it to your High Discretions to consider how that, because of non-residence of persons of Holy Church upon their parsonages, mickle people lacks both ghostly food and bodily and other relief, against old true foundations of such parsonages; so that, in many parts of England, in sufficient parishes now in late days, for lack of parsons and priests to do divine services and sacraments, children have died unchristened, and long delays of buryings, and women upon child perished. And, moreover in some parish churches scarcely three Masses done in a week, and some but one day in a week, and some never one. And also, whereas old custom was that [a] third part [of] the goods of Holy Church should be spented within the same parish upon the needy and poor of the parish now, upon late days, all that ever may be reared of such parsonages is taken and brought to the parsons, in what place that they be in; and in so far forth that, against kindly reason, that if a poor man make any one penny of his tithings, at after when he should be houseled and receive his sacrament his housel and his sacrament shall be denied him against charity or good kindly love, as a true shepherd should do to his sheep. And moreover, for no sermon-preaching nor other manner of knowing of all good doctrine, is none of all these defaults corrected nor amended. That it like to your High Discretions to pray our Sovereign Lord the King, that by the assent of Lords Spiritual and Temporal in this present Parliament, that all manner of parsons and vicars at

¹ *Sic*, perhaps for *lake* (= *lack*). But the general sense is clear enough.

hospitallers, and all those that care have of soul or hospitality, eye to hold¹ that they hold residence upon their parsonages vicarages and hospitalities, upon pain of losing the value of their benefice, the one half to the king and the other half to the patron. Considering that to our Sovereign Lord the King Henry, father to our Lord the King that now is, whose soul God assoil, in the Parliament at Leicester, it was said and promised that execution of each matter should have been done, had it been so that the See of Canterbury had been plein, there as it was at that time void, for such matters of Lollardy and their sect as in that Parliament was declared. And if case befall that many a parson, vicar and hospitaller of this land have plurality, (and some tri-plurality) that every one of them may hold residence for the rate upon each of their benefices, upon the pain aforesaid. Considering that because of non-residence of parsons and vicars much evil example of soul heal and many other mischiefs fall from day to day. Also that what manner man so has any benefice spiritual, that he be [ordained] priest within twelve months after the end of this present Parliament, or else it be lawful to his patron to make new presentation, notwithstanding the plenarty² of him be six months. And also what manner man shall have in time coming any benefice spiritual, of any man's presentation, that he be priest within twelve months after his induction, upon the same pain.

"The king, by the advice aforesaid, hath delivered the bill to my Lord of Canterbury, charging him to purvey of remedy for his province. And semblably shall write to the Church of York for that province."

OXFORDSHIRE STATISTICS

An archidiaconal visitation of Oxfordshire was made in 1520, and has been recently published (Oxford Archaeol. Soc. *Report*, no. 70, 1925). The analysis in my text excludes the "peculiar", over which the archdeacon had no rights of visitation, and which he therefore treated as non-existent. In so far as these differed from the rest, we might expect that they would be in a more neglected state. The total of parishes visited was 193, of which 3 are reported "all well" (*omnia bene*). Let us assume that the archdeacon's total silence as to 37 others has a no less favourable significance; this gives 40 blameless parishes against 153 with which serious fault is found. In 109 cases serious repairs were needed, and slight repairs in 9 more. Among the clergy, 58 were absentees, and 24 had set their benefices to farm, 16 of these to laymen, in spite of the express prohibition in Canon Law. In 47 cases the parochial accounts were unsatisfactory; and in 35 (what directly concerns us here) it is reported that almsgiving or hospitality is neglected. The monastic vicarages show very badly here; they were 16 in number, or only 8.3 per cent. of the total of parishes, yet as sinners against the

¹ To "keep an eye upon them" = "To see to it that they hold residence" etc.

² "Plenarty of a benefice, the state of being full or occupied, opposite to vacancy", O.E.D.

law of almsgiving there were 13 out of 35, or 37 per cent. In 10 cases it is complained that alms are not distributed, and in 3 that the vicar neglects hospitality; and even the bare 3 monastic churches which are not condemned on either of these scores are in bad repair, while 2 of them have absentee clergy.

REGULARS AND SECULARS

The natural result of this state of things was a perpetual state of war, latent or patent, between the monks and the parish priests. This conflict was even worse on the Continent than in England, especially in France under the Ancien Régime, when nearly all the monasteries were *in commendam*, and still less of the parish income went to the parish itself than in the Middle Ages. The *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France* for 1933 quotes three actual cases which illustrate not only this point but also the complete abandonment of the old prohibition against serving-women in monasteries (pp. 43-4). An earlier passage gives evidence for the degradation of the parish clergy through sheer poverty—almost mendicity—forced upon them by the appropriation system (pp. 25 ff.). Chassin, in his *Cahiers des Curés*, generalizes in a remarkable passage, marked by Lord Acton in his copy: "The gold of the river, from its very source, was absorbed by the clerical aristocracy, regular and secular. Scarcely anything was left for charity, for schools, or even for the expenses of worship. Parish churches were falling into ruin; nothing was rebuilt but tithe-barns. The priests, on their *portion congrue*, vegetated in insupportable want, while the holders of rich benefices and of the great tithes made ducks and drakes of clerical revenues. The absurd and iniquitous distribution of Church property under the Ancien Régime renders Turgot's arguments against these foundations unanswerable. For instance, 39 Premonstratensian houses, by their own valuation, had 45 million *livres* in property, which gave them a yearly revenue of more than a million. The Dominicans of Toulouse, 236 in number, acknowledged more than 208,000 *livres* of clear yearly income, without counting their convents and enclosures, and, in the colonies, real property, and negroes, and other chattels,¹ valued at several millions. The Benedictines of Cluny numbered 298; they had 1,800,000 *livres* a year. Those of St-Maur numbered 1672; their fortune amounted to 8 millions, together with an equal sum which came to those commendatory abbots and priors who did no duty and lived at the royal court in Paris; this takes no account of their churches and houses, valued at 24 millions. The Abbot of Clairvaux alone had from 300,000 to 400,000 *livres* a year. In the Cambrai district, the clergy possessed 1400 out of the 1700 ploughlands. In Hainault and Artois they had threequarters of the land. They had half in Roussillon and Alsace and Franche-Comté, where the chapter of St-Claude limited to scions of nobility, kept in servitude at least 20,000 peasant of the Jura."

¹ *Sic*: "des nègres, et autres effets".

Chassin gives further details on pp. 68ff. Miserable as the priest's *portion congrue* was, it would have been far less if royalty had not repeatedly interfered, from 1629 to 1786, to force upon the monastic appropriators an increase of salary. Private Masses, and similar "casual" sources of income, were drying up on account of "the indevotion of this age and the hard times". Although Charles the Great¹ had decreed that the administration of sacraments must be gratuitous, the priest could support himself only by constant violation of this natural law. "Folk had to pay for bans, for dispensations, for betrothals, for baptism, for first communion, for extreme unction and for burial. They paid to the bishop, the church fabric, the rector, the fabric-fund, the curate, and the monks, quite apart from what was sent to Rome. 'Everything is paid for' (wrote the Abbé de Vermont) 'and especially at the moment when a poor creature has lost his wife or child, or whatsoever he loved most in this world, just at that miserable moment these "casual" Church fees, which at any time are unjust, become an absolute insult.'"

The immediate effect of Joseph II's dissolution of that mass of Austrian monasteries (1782-90) was that "the parish clergy [*das Weltklerus*], for a generation and more, blessed the Josephine rule. The new parson was more independent and better placed; the cure of souls was improved; many a hamlet had now received a chaplain or a parson who said Mass, preached on Sundays, and brought the last words of consolation to the lonely dying mountaineer" (A. Wolf, *Die Aufhebung des Klöster in Innerösterreich* (Vienna, 1871), 165).

The extent to which this neglect of appropriated parishes went on after the Reformation is illustrated by the records of those dependent on St-Antoine-de-Vienne (Maillet-Guy, *Paroisses*, 64, 70, 74; compare p. 117 for neglect in 1423). At St-Vincent-de-Laon in 1612 (which of course is outside our period) the abbot "left the church so desolate that there was no longer a single corner where Mass could be securely said, by reason of the wind, which one day blew the Blessed Host from off the altar" (Wyard, 540). At Caunes in Languedoc, which had once been among the richer abbeys, when the monks were with some difficulty persuaded to accept the reform of St-Maur (1664), the inventory shows the church and its ornaments in a disgraceful state of dirt and neglect (*Caunes*, 198ff.).

THE BUSIEST PRIEST IN ENGLAND

We may conclude this section with a quotation from Bishop Latimer, for whose picturesque exaggeration we must, of course, make allowance (*Sermons*, Parker Soc. 67): "Well, well, is this their duty? Is this their office? Is this their calling? Should we have ministers of the church to be comptrollers of the mints? Is this a meet office for a priest that hath cure of souls? Is this his charge? I would here ask one question:

¹ And, Chassin might have added, Council after Council in the Middle Ages, without any real effect.

I would fain know who controlleth the devil at home in his parish, while he controlleth the mint?...Let the priest preach, and the noblemen handle the temporal matters. Moses was a marvellous man, a good man: Moses was a wonderful fellow, and did his duty, being a married man: we lack such as Moses was. Well, I would all men would look to their duty, as God hath called them, and then we should have a flourishing christian common-weal. And now I would ask a strange question: who is the most diligent bishop and prelate in all England, that passeth all the rest in doing his office? I can tell, for I know him who it is; I know him well. But now I think I see you listening and hearkening that I should name him. There is one that passeth all the other, and is the most diligent prelate and preacher in all England. And will ye know who it is? I will tell you: It is the devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all other; he is never out of his diocese; he is never from his cure; ye shall never find him unoccupied; he is ever in his parish; he keepeth residence at all times; ye shall never find him out of the way; call for him when you will he is ever at home; the diligentest preacher in all the realm; he is ever at his plough: no lording nor loitering can hinder him; he is ever applying his business, ye shall never find him idle, I warrant you."

CHAPTER XIV

MONASTIC DOWRIES

"It is stated in some of the manuscripts that St Edmund went to several convents before he came to Catesby, but that in each case the superioress wished first to inquire as to the amount of the dowry that was forthcoming before consenting to accept his sisters. It must be remembered that in those days all such institutions were endowed, and most of them were well off. Although, therefore, it is lawful to require a certain sum to provide for the maintenance of a new subject—as is now regularly done—St Edmund seems to have looked on this solicitude about the amount to be paid as evidence of a worldly spirit, to which he would be no party. There was in those days no fixed sum as at present, and he looked for a community where the first care should be to ascertain whether a new subject would be likely to make a good religious, and where temporal considerations should occupy a secondary place. This at least seems the easiest explanation of what at first sight appears almost an unreasonable solicitude. The community at Catesby was notoriously a small and poor one" (*St Edmund, Abp of Canterbury*, arranged by [Bishop] Bernard Ward (1903), 26).

I add a few more references out of many which might be given to show the prevalence of monastic dowries: Mabillon, *Ann. Benedict.* v, 217, 247, 293 (Vendôme exceptional in not requiring dowry), 315; vi, 96; *Ramsey Chartulary*, R.S. II, 277; K. Lamprecht, *Deutsches*

Wirthschaftsleben im M.A. I, 2, pp. 679-80; Petrus Cantor, *P.L.* ccv, 130-1; *Tournus*, II, 294; Gerson, *Opera*, I, 655, 661; De Rosny, 84, 129; Dugdale-Caley, VI, 710, 745; Bulliot, pp. 60, 137; *Cart. Molesme*, I, 195. The following case, though not strictly in a line with the other transactions, throws an interesting side-light upon the subject: "One Aelgar, a priest, gives his church to the Monastery as his dowry when admitted a monk. It is stipulated that the next of kin to Aelgar shall always hold the vicarage, paying a small pension, Aelgar's own son being the first vicar. If the nearest of kin be not in holy orders, another person is to be presented whose appointment will be profitable to the Monastery" (*Lit. Cant.* R.S. III, 356 [1160]).

CORRODIES

Luke of Worth, who in about 1200 was "our beloved servant" and, apparently at the end of his life, actually took the vows at Oseney, gave that monastery in about 1220 a handsome gift of land in return for a corrody for himself and his servant. The monastery added a curious proviso to this corrody: "if, however, he should marry a wife or have a concubine dwelling with him, the whole of the aforesaid endowment shall be taken from him" (*Cart. Oseney*, I, 174; II, 481, 484). One corrody granted by St Frideswide's, Oxford, in about 1260 has a curious clause. The purchaser gives £12. 13s. 4d. in ready money, and binds himself "to the said prior and convent that if, in course of time, meanwhile [*i.e.* before his death] any land, house, rent or heritage fall or comè in to him, whether in the city of Oxford or its suburbs or elsewhere, by inheritance or escheat or by any other chance, then they may have it fully and possess it for ever" (*Cart. St Frideswide*, I, 336).

A CRADLE-MONK

The following story is translated from Dom Martène's summary; since the originals, which he found among the archives of Marmoutier, are possibly lost now, and certainly inaccessible to the present compiler. The Latin may be found in Mabillon and Martène, *Ann. Bened.* VI (1739), 147: "The year before this (*i.e.* 1125) Abbot Odo had assembled a General Chapter at Marmoutier, wherein a very strange scene was enacted. One William, surnamed Girolet, who had slain Geoffrey brother of Rolland de Liry, came with Rolland to Marmoutier, to wash away the filth of his homicide, and that this manslaughter might be remitted unto him. There he entered the General Chapter, where the monks sat around; and, for Geoffrey's soul's sake whom he had slain, he accepted the chastisement of the rod from the hand of lord Odo the Abbot, to whom and to the monks of Marmoutier he gave whatsoever he had long possessed, by due course of law, in the church of St-Sauveur, and all the tithes that he had hitherto drawn from that parish; which deed of gift, together with the rod itself, he laid upon the high altar. A noble example of moderation in this Rolland, and

worthy of a Christian! who, though he might have avenged his brother's death and urged this man's condemnation for homicide, was rather content to bring this manslayer to Marmoutier, there to expiate his crime by alms; to which gift Rolland himself added the tithes of his own vineyards. . . . Nor did Rolland's piety end here. When Abbot Odo came to Liry, he met him with his wife, his brethren, his son, and a great multitude of his friends. Here he gave into the abbot's hand the tithes of the parish of Liry, whether of corn or of wine or of any other thing, and left the deed of gift upon the altar, saying 'I and my wife aforesaid have offered to God and St Martin our own son John Martin,¹ who lieth yet in his cradle, laying this infant upon the altar of St Mary at Liry, and then giving him into the hands of the venerable Abbot Odo, whom we pray by God's mercy that, so soon as this same child be grown of age to be taught, he may be so long brought up in some monastery of the Marmoutier congregation, at the abbot's disposition, until he be of age to bear the travail of a monk's Religion, and then to take the vows.' Such oblations of infants are prescribed in St Benedict's Rule, and we often hear of children offered by their parents at the age of 5 or 7; but there is no other record of a child in his cradle. Such was the faith and piety of this Rolland, who heaped yet other gifts upon Marmoutier."

CHAPTER XV

MONASTIC TRADERS

(Hugh of St-Cher on Lament. i, 7, 8.)

"*The enemies have mocked at her sabbaths*, because the worst sins are procured and committed on feast-days, as St Augustine saith. . . . Moreover, the devil mocketh at the sabbaths of Religious, who do no outward work, but who secretly heap up riches and cease not to amass property. . . . *Jerusalem hath grievously sinned*, etc. The word *sin* is here used as specially designating the greed or love of private property in Religious. . . . *Therefore is she become unstable*, running hither and thither for the sake of merchandise, to buy sheep and oxen and beasts of the field; to buy wine and growing corn, and the like, which is unlawful even to the laity.² Wherefore if thou ask him 'Whence comest thou, Satan?' he may well answer thee in those words of Job (i, 7 and ii, 2), 'I have gone round about the earth, and walked through it'. Or he may be called *unstable*, as one who goeth forth from his cloister."

¹ *Nomine Johannem Martini*. This is not exactly a double Christian name—a thing almost unknown in the Middle Ages—for it will be noted that *Martini* is in the genitive. It doubtless means that John had already been pre-dedicated to St Martin.

² As partaking of unlawful speculation, and contradicting the medieval doctrine of the Just Price.

WALTER MAP'S *DE NUGIS CURIALIUM*

"Our God is not as their god; our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and no new god; but indeed theirs is a new one. Our God says: 'Whoso leaveth not all things for My sake is not worthy of Me.' Theirs says: 'Whoso gaineth not all things for his own sake, is not worthy of me.' Says ours: 'He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none.' Says theirs: 'If you have not two coats, take from him that hath.' Says ours: 'Blessed is he that maketh any poor and needy.' Says ours: 'Take heed lest your hearts be weighed down with the cares of this world, and that day come upon you unawares.' Says theirs: 'Take heed lest your purses be not weighed down through caring for this world, lest poverty come upon you as a robber.' Says ours: 'No man can serve God and Mammon.' Says theirs: 'No man can serve God without Mammon.'"

DISGUISED PURCHASES

Laurent continues, after the words quoted in my text: "Here are two examples. In 1231 Mauger, bailiff of Ervy and Troyes, gives to the abbey of Molesme the heritage of his wife at Arthonnay. 'I give it' (he says) 'for reasons of piety, for the health of my soul and the soul of my aforesaid wife, as alms, without keeping anything back.' Yet we can see from other sources that this act of pure liberality cost the bailiff of Troyes the considerable sum of 80 *livres* of Provins. The second example is a sale by the famous Énard de Brienne, who competed with Thibaut IV for succession to the county of Champagne, and who was a notoriously necessitous person. Énard de Brienne, lord of Ramerupt, and Philippa his wife, in reparation for their injustices and looking towards the health of their souls and those of their ancestors, give in pure and perpetual alms to God and to Our Lady of Molesme the villages of Lagnes and Magny and part of Ricey; the lady Philippa, 'in pure devotion and by inspiration of God', agrees and approves 'the said alms and gift' in 1245. But another charter, very brief and laconic, reduces this pious phraseology to its true value. It is a formal receipt in which this same Énard attests that the abbot and monks have paid him 1000 *l.* of Provins in payment for Lagnes and its dependencies, and that they owe him nothing further. It must be added that this receipt is dated nine months earlier than the solemn deed which I have quoted. In short, donations were in high favour in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, at a time when all men vied in forming and increasing monastic patrimonies; but, practised in excess, they were soon utilized, in the juridical relations of churches and lay-folk, as a convenient cloak to hide other contracts which were then considered less honourable" (*Cartulaire de Molesme*, ed. J. Laurent, I (1907), 41).

MONASTIC LIQUOR-TRADE

For the monks' sale of wine at Pontoise in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Depoin, 161-2, 195, 199, 200-1. Other cases

may be found in *Münster*, 113, 116 [1340]; *Eiflia Sacra*, II, 5, 614; *Revue Mabillon*, XXI (1931), 92; *Ann. Colmar*, 192; *Lyre*, 43; Van Lokeren, pt. 1, 75, 98, 100, 111, 133, 141; cf. 140, 143, 151, 158, 200 a, 214 a.

The modern case is thus reported in *The Times* (Jan. 3, 1935): "TRAPPIST BEER. The Antwerp Commercial Court has non-suited the Trappist Fathers in a claim for 250,000f. damages for unlawful competition made by them against a brewer of Brasschaet, near Antwerp, who sold beer under the name of Trappist Beer. For the brewer it was contended that the name 'Trappist' was not a special mark, but applied to several beers made in different Trappist monasteries; that the Trappists were not traders, and therefore could not complain of competition on the part of a real trader. The Court, in a closely reasoned judgment, agreed entirely with the brewer's submissions. It held that the Trappists were an association not for purposes of profit, and that their ideal was to live according to the precepts of St Benedict, to do charitable work, and to propagate the Catholic Faith. Though it could be admitted that a religious community might carry on a trade to supply its charitable funds, it was inadmissible that such a community should place itself on the same footing as real traders, whose business was carried on exclusively for profit. The Trappists were ordered to pay the costs of the action."

SPECULATION IN COAL

(*Scottish Supplications to Rome*, 1418-1422, ed. E. R. Lindsay and A. I. Cameron, Scottish Hist. Soc. 3rd series, XXIII (1934), 222.)

The pope writes in 1420 on the case of the Augustinian Fr Thomas Purlock of St Andrews cathedral priory, who, after that he, "with the will, licence and express consent of the Prior and convent and for the evident good and utility of the same, had caused certain coal seams (*carbonaria*) in the lands of the said Church to be prospected and mined (*perquiri et effodi*) at the substance (*bonis*) and expense of himself and his friends, even selling his own patrimony, and had found them and had built a house with a walled garden within the bounds of the said monastery (*in circuitu infra dictum monasterium*), the Prior and convent with the licence, will and authority of Henry Bishop of St Andrews made an agreement with Thomas that he should recover his expenses from the fruits, rents and profits of the said coal seams as a first charge (*primitus et ante omnia*), and that if the coal seams should bring in to the conventual house £40 of current money, he should have £20, if 40 marks that he should have 20 marks, if £20, £10, if 20 marks, 10 marks, by way of pension for life—for eight years in schools where he wishes, and for the rest of the time residing in his monastery Church, and that he and Michael de Balcongy, perpetual vicar of the parish church of Luchris, St Andrews diocese, might dwell for life in the house which he had built within the garden; and they dispensed him for the said period of eight years to dwell in the schools

and to study in any lawful faculty (as is contained in the letters and instruments thereanent, which he is ready to show). But—since the said Thomas, who is moved by love of possessions, and who ought to have 18 marks of like money yearly from the convent for his sustentation in food and dress, seems likely to burden the convent if he should recover his expenses in this way and also if he receive half of the yearly revenues of the said coal seams,—he therefore supplicates that the Pope, in place of his expenses, pension and sustentation in food and clothing, would reserve to him for life a pension of 40 similar marks from the lands of new Grange of Drumcarow (*in et super terris grangie nove de Drumcarow*) which he now has to a certain term: which reservation being made, he offers to remit and renounce all the above expenses and other pensions; and also that the Pope would dispense him to remain for life in a university (*in generali studio*) or other honest place of the said order without requiring a licence of his superior, and to levy other possessions with what may remain of his pension and to make restitution to those who ought to succeed in his patrimony, which was sold as above, and that he and the said Michael and the longer liver of them may possess for life the above-specified house with its garden, as was granted by the said convent.” To which the pope replied: “*Fiat ad vitam suam de quadraginta libris si cedit in evidentem utilitatem ecclesie et committatur Ordinario. O.* [Granted £40 for life, if for the evident utility of the church; and let it be committed to the Ordinary.] Florence, 10 Kal. August, anno 3.”

TRADE IN MARRIAGES

(*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, A.D. 1361, p. 582.)

35 *Ed. III.* “To the sheriffs of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wilts, Southampton and all other counties of England. Whereas the king, hearing that Richard de Brankescombe and Robt Weye to whom he granted the marriage of Richard son and heir of Walter Wolf, who held in chief, without disparagement, sold the said marriage to Simon atte Pitte and he sold it to the prior of Pilton who married the heir in sanguine villani whereby he is disparaged, lately ordered Tho^s Cheyne, escheator in Devon, to make inquisition touching the premises and by that inquisition it is found that the heir was married by the said Simon to Denise daughter of the said prior, begotten of an handmaid (ancilla) after the prior was a monk and professed in Malmesbury abbey and that the heir is of the age of ten years and more and the woman of the age of twelve years and more; and because in the statute of Merton it is contained that if lords marry heirs in their ward to villeins or others such as burgesses whereby they are disparaged, and such heir be within fourteen years or of such an age that he cannot consent to matrimony, then if the relatives complain that lord shall lose the wardship and all profit which was taken thereof shall turn to the profit

of him who shall be within age, according to the disposition of the relatives, on account of the shame done to him, the king willing that the statute be inviolably observed and for the indemnity of himself and the heir has appointed Robt Cornu, 'chivaler', Walter Cornu, Walter Steveneson and Henry atte Halle to arrest the heir and keep him safely until that which the statute requires be done."

SERFS SOLD

The chartulary of St-Père-de-Chartres is extremely instructive in this confusion of spiritual and material interests. Three eleventh-century documents recite, in their preambles, the most religious reasons why a lord should free his serf. God spake through His prophet, "Let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke; then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, 'here I am'" (Is. lviii, 6, 9). The serfs are "set free for the good of my soul" (*Cart. St-Père*, 158, 159, 180). Yet, on looking farther into the deeds, we find that they are freed from the lay lord only to enter into the servitude of the monastery, which in one case has actually bought them. In another case, every curse is invoked upon anyone who may oppose the transfer: "Let him be anathematized by St Peter, to whom our Lord Jesus Christ hath given the power of binding and loosing; let him be shut out from the gates of paradise with the traitor Judas and with them who crucified our Lord; let him be given over to the devil, for torment in the nethermost flames of hell to all eternity" (*ibid.* p. 154). Yet all this religious sanction is invoked merely for the transference of two servile families from the bondage of the count's son to the bondage of the abbot. There are a good many real manumissions in this chartulary; but in most cases it is explicitly stated for what sum the serf bought his freedom from the monks.¹ Once, indeed, we find a batch of sixty-nine freed, an instance for which I have found no other parallel in monastic records. But this is in 1208, when the legal bonds had become greatly relaxed; and the bondmen in this case had already drifted out of reach; they were living on other manors; one of them had become Mayor of Cambrai; and the enforcement of dues may well have cost more than it was worth (p. 673).² Here, as elsewhere, the monks would divide the brood of a bondman with some other master, when there had been a mixed marriage (p. 328). But the editor is probably right in judging that an abbey serf, like a royal serf, had a better position than those who belonged to other masters (p. lvi).

¹ They are summarized by Guérard on p. xlvii of his introduction. He concludes (p. liii): "Quelquefois ils obtenaient gratuitement leur liberté de la générosité des moines; plus souvent ils l'achetaient."

² As Guérard points out, "the rights which the masters had kept over their serfs could scarcely now be worth such a price" as they had paid in earlier days (p. xlviii).

CRITICS OF MONASTIC TRADE

Hugh of St Victor [1120] is eloquent as to the worldly contaminations which had crept into claustral life; monks and nuns move about in the world and take their colour from worldlings: "there is no kind of dishonesty in which the monastic Order is not involved; there is scarce any blandishment or temptation whereby the chastity of the nuns is not stained." And he quotes from Baruch iv, 1: "the stones of the sanctuary are scattered in the top of every street" (*P.L.* CLXXVI, col. 1086). Peter of Blois [1160] wrote a whole long letter *To a Trading Cleric* (*Ep.* 17). It begins: "If thou wert intent upon the order of thy profession and the grace of divine vocation, thou wouldst busy thyself with reading rather than with trading, with the liberal arts than with merchandise." He fortifies this by a quotation from the Psalms which, like many other passages familiar to the Middle Ages, rests upon a mistranslation of the Hebrew (Ps. lxx, 15, Vulg. (A.V. lxxi, 15)). Peter, like Augustine, follows the text of the old Roman Psalter, *quoniam non cognovi negotiationem*, and runs the sense on, thus reading: "Because I have not known trading, I will enter into the powers of the Lord." The Vulgate, on the other hand, reads *litteraturam*: "Because I have not known learning." There is a curious interest in Raynaud's attempts to show that both versions come to the same sense (p. 44). Cardinal Hugh of St-Cher [1250] comments thus on Ps. liv, 12, Vulg. (Ps. lv, 11, A.V.): "Usury and deceit have not departed from its streets." What the Psalmist says of Jerusalem (he writes), may be expounded as referring to the Holy City of monasticism: "For certain monks have marketplaces to sell their corn and wool and other things; and from such places, literally, there departeth not usury and deceit, as we have said above concerning worldly folk, for they sell more dearly for a respite of time which they grant. This is horrible to say, but yet more horrible to do, as Hosea saith (vi, 10): 'I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel; the fornications of Ephraim there'" (*Opera*, II, 140, 2. The word *plateae*, on which he is commenting, means both *streets* and *market-places*). Bromyard, a Dominican and a contemporary of Chaucer, complains that the monks of his day are too often public merchants, under cover of their freedom from tolls and taxes (*Tractatus Juris*, MS. Roy. 10, C. x, s.v. *Religio*, ff. 122 sq.; also in printed copy of 1475 *Incipit Opus Trivium* [B. Mus. I.B. 2986, signature h]). Dionysius Cartusianus writes: "Since Holy Scripture doth so eminently bless the poor, and doth so terribly condemn the rich [Luke vi, 20, 24; Ps. x, 14; Matt. xix, 24], how is it that Christian priests and prelates—nay, Religious also—rest not so long as they have a competence and sufficiency, but implicate themselves in many cares and worldly desires, buying and selling and alienating and lending?" (*Opera*, XXXVII, 99).

This is admirably illustrated in an article on *Religion in Spain* at the present day, by the Protestant Chaplain at Barcelona (*Modern*

Churchman, May 1933, pp. 90, 92: the author is describing the articles for Church reform proposed by the new Cortes).

"The chief provisions of the Proyecto are [6, of which the 5th runs:] *No religious Orders can indulge in trade...* Indeed, this custom in the past of the monasteries and nunneries paying no taxes, and so competing on unfair terms with private businesses that had to pay taxes, was a cause of their wealth and also of their being so thoroughly hated. ... Among the workers, I believe, tho' many of them hate the Orders as living in luxury while condemning them to live in great poverty, for their cura there is often a genuine respect and affection, and much sympathy is expressed on all hands for the country cura who, deprived as he will be very shortly of his small Government pittances, will have to live a harder life than themselves, unless the Church by a wise use of its funds can come to his assistance."

Compare this with pp. 201ff. in Raynaud (§§ 123-7) where, with special reference to Justus's sermon, he enlarges on the irritation caused in seventeenth-century France by the rivalry of Religious with the ordinary apothecaries. And, he makes one very pertinent reflection. He acknowledges that only a small minority among the great host of Religious competed thus with the man of the world: as, indeed, the liquor-sellers also were doubtless in a minority. But he points out that this laid all the heavier burden upon that minority's conscience: how could they justify what was at least an apparent breach of their profession so long as the majority, by their abstinence, seemed to disapprove?

PROFITEERING FROM CRUSADES

For further instances of monastic gains from this source see *Caunes*, 68; Blanchot, 108; Hurter, II, 29; Vauluisart, *Hist. Ill. Yonne*, 808, *Grestain*, 105; Van Lokeren, pt. I, 88, 97, 99, 100; Henry, 239; Bulliot, 241; *Yorkshire Records*, LXXX (1931), 179; Wyard, 154, 179, 196-7; *St Benet's*, 18, 187 (nos. 27 and 155); Lambert of Ardres in *M.G.H.* xxiv, 632.

MONKS AND JEWS

Cf. Lamprecht, *Beiträge*, 140, where Lord Acton has marked as specially noteworthy the following sentences: "The free and easy way in which business was done at Cluny is shown in the last sentence of the quotation in my note 14. The bank-business of St André was managed by Jewish financiers in the service of the abbey; cf. *Cart. St André*, 91, 975-93: 'Let H. the Jew and his sons and their heirs do the business of the monks, and let them be provided with their service and help them from their superfluities.'" Lamprecht elsewhere (*Wirth.* II, 227) gives a memorandum which has survived from the abbey of St Maximin of the sums lent out to villagers of Lintsch at interest in 1567. The monks had lent 341 florins to twelve borrowers; in nearly every case it is recorded that the loan was covered by a solid

mortgage, and the interest varied from 5 to 8 per cent. These loans were arranged on conditions which would unhesitatingly have been condemned as usurious by earlier Canon Law, though justified by the modifications which, from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, had been made necessary by the growth of commerce on a large scale.

MONKS AND USURY

Further references to monks and usurious practices will be found in Van Lokeren, pt. 1, 139; *Eiflia Sacra*, II, 55; A. Luchaire, *Social Life*, 205; *Belbuck*, 38; *Gladbach*, 75-6; *Pièces détachées*, 289-92 (usury disguised); *Lyre*, 452; Duckett, *Charters and Records*, II, 137 (Farley, Wilts, 1279: "The prior is publicly defamed of incontinence, usury, and inobedient; and he is a fornicator and hath been for full 10 years, as he himself hath confessed and says").

For monastic banking, see Van Lokeren, pt. 1, 97; *Lyre*, 40-126; *Eiflia Sacra*, II, 628-9, 751; Bulliot, 243-5; *St Benet*, 244; Borderie, 131, 240; *Wesfeld*, 27; *Collect. Anglo-Prem.* I, 55, 85, 240.

TOURNAMENTS PROHIBITED

Ducange in his edition of Joinville, *Diss.* VI. Popes Innocent II, Eugenius III and Alexander III (1130 to 1181) forbade unconditionally "those detestable markets or fairs which are vulgarly called tournaments": offenders are excommunicate, and the clergy must deny them Christian burial. The reasons given are the frequency of quarrels and loss of life. Innocent III forbade them for five years, and Innocent IV "unable to suppress them altogether, forbade them for three years at his Council of Lyons in 1245". One of his reasons was the waste of money and energy which might have been spent on the Crusades. So again with Nicholas IV and Clement V. "But the ardour of the nobility was so great . . . that no anathema or papal bull could stop the vogue of tournaments." William of Newburgh [1190] and Knighton [1390] both record the exercise of tournaments "in scorn of the prudent decree of the Church", "notwithstanding papal prohibition".

THE MONKS AS CAPITALIST

(*Piers Plowman*, B. xv, 310ff., modernized.)

Many of these cloisterers (writes the poet) are in truth wealthy: to endow them further is like pouring water into the Thames. If Religious would refuse the offerings of raveners, then lords and ladies would be loth to transgress, and we should have true charity in the world. He continues:

"For had ye pottage and bread enough, and penny-ale to drink,
And a mess therewith of one manner kind,

Ye had right enough, ye Religious, and so your Rule me told...¹
 If unlearned men knew this Latin, they would look to whom they give
 And advise themselves before, a five days or six,
 Ere they made over to monks or canons their rents.
 Alas! lords and ladies, unlearned counsel have ye
 To give from your heirs what your forbears you left,
 And ye give it to pray for you to such as be rich,
 And be founded and enfeoffed eke to pray for other men.
 Who performeth this prophecy [from the Psalmist], of the people that
 now live,
He hath distributed, he hath given to the poor?
 If any people perform that text, it is these poor friars,
 For that which they beggen about, in building they spend,
 And on themselves some, and such as be their labourers,
 And from them that have they taken, and give to them that have not...
 But Religious that rich be should rather feast beggars
 Than burgesses that rich be, as the Book teacheth."

CHAPTER XVI

MONASTIC BANKERS

(Bigwood, 145.)

"During the first portion of the Middle Ages—especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and in the early thirteenth—the abbeys and monasteries constituted establishments of credit. Receiving ample liberalities, enjoying superfluities of revenue, they had often money at their disposal and sought how to use it. The only investment they knew was the acquisition of real property. Besides buying this directly, in full ownership, they practised for a long while the contract of mortgage, and, later, of 'vif gage'. By the middle of the thirteenth century, this situation ended; not only was the 'gage' contract prohibited as contradicting the prohibition of lending at interest, and the contract of rent-charges became more and more frequent, but also the situation of the great abbeys became less brilliant, and even quite critical." I have collected many references for monastic trading which will be found among my papers at Chicago. Here I only print those noted at different times in Dugdale-Caley; Chatteris, II, 614; Burton, III, 49; Bury, III, 114; Spalding, III, 229; Selby, III, 503; Norwich, IV, 5.

¹ Here he quotes Job vi, 5 with commentary: "Will the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or will the ox low when he standeth before a full manger? The nature of brute beasts condemneth thee; for, whereas they are content with the common food, thine iniquity hath come forth as it were from fatness" (Ps. lxxii, 7, Vulg.).

CHAPTER XVII

CAUNES AND HERETICAL PLUNDER

Béziat adds (p. 103): "Here comes a significant fact which must not be omitted here. Among the domains confiscated by the king and sold to the monastery were those of Pierre-Artus de Lauran, an outlawed knight who had followed [the count of Toulouse] to Spain. This knight came back, and was invested with his fiefs by [the count's successor] in 1232. But the abbot not only kept the lordship of the domain and the ancient feudal services; he also compelled the knight to pay for this restitution with 60 *sols* and 19 *setiers* of wheat. Now, if Pierre-Artus was a heretic, the canons of recent councils denied him all right of possessing anything: if he was not, then the confiscation which he had suffered was illegal, and had no force of law. The fact is that, at bottom, heresy was generally only a pretext; and greed had at least as much share as religious zeal in the judgements pronounced by the royal seneschals."

CHAPTER XVIII

EXTRAVAGANCE IN ARCHITECTURE

(*English Historical Review*, April 1934, p. 326.)

"... It is interesting to notice that in 1192 the abbot of Clairvaux was censured for his failure to reprove the monks of Vaucelles for the extravagant splendour of their church, of the chevet of which a plan remains in the sketch book of Villard de Honnecourt. In 1196 the abbot of Fontfroide, who treated his brother abbots inhospitably, decked the floor of his presbytery with carpets and burned more tapers than the Order permitted. The abbot of La Cour-Dieu in 1204 was ordered to remove images which had been set up, with the encouragement of the bishop of Paris, in the daughter house of Lorroy in the diocese of Bourges. At the famous abbey of Pontigny in 1205 the *curiosa varietas* of the costly pavement of the church was condemned as savouring of frivolity and discrediting poverty, *sancti Cisterciensis Ordinis nutrice*. The abbot, moreover, had entertained the Queen of France and her ladies, admitting them to the proceedings of the chapter and to processions in cloister, and lodging them for two nights in the infirmary, on the plea of indulgences which it was denied that he had received: had it not been for the intercession of the archbishop of Rheims, a former abbot of Cîteaux, he would have been deposed. The chapter of 1211 issued a general decree forbidding the use of paintings,

sculptures, and images, with other luxuries which were contrary to the spirit of the Order, and in 1218, the removal of all patterned pavements was decreed. . . ."

CHAPTER XX

(a) (Franz, 83-4.)

The first of the devil's decoy-pipes is one by which "very many are seduced . . . especially rich folk and nobles, who dream that they can come to salvation through almsgiving and pilgrimages. For [such a man] says: 'Sir, I give alms freely to Religious and poor; I have built a cloister; it is written: *Redeem thou thy sins with alms* (Daniel iv, 24). If at my death the prayers and stones and timber be put into the scale wherein my works are weighed, how far will they overbear my sins? . . .' The second deception whereby the devil most subtly cozeneth is those who think themselves prudent when they say: 'I set much hope upon these good cloisterers, that I shall be helped by their prayers. For I have loved them, and have letters of fraternity with them, and they pray for me by night and day. Moreover, I have put my son into the cloister; also my daughter, with 30 marks, and I could have got a man to pay 40 for her if I had given her in marriage; and these childrer pray ever for me.' Fool, that prayer is null, since thou despisest its effect; for, while they pray, thou meanwhile dishonourest God' (cf. *Bert. Regensb.* i, 137).

(b) (*V.C.H. Norfolk*, II, 426.)

In 1476 "the Master-General [of the Dominicans] empowered the prior [at Lynn] for five years to admit as many as he would to the benefits and suffrages of the Order, provided their alms were applied to the repair of the convent" after a fire.

CHAPTER XXI

MONASTIC ACCOUNT-ROLLS

Those which have been printed represent only a fraction of all the survivals. The bulkiest edition is that published by Canon Fowler for the Surtees Society, in three volumes: but its evidential value is enormously diminished by its haphazard and incomplete character. A single complete set of one obedientiary's rolls, printed at perhaps one-sixth of this cost, would have been far more valuable. The item

are selected quite capriciously; it is therefore impossible to use them statistically. We may, for instance, gather pretty certainly, from the few entries of help given to university students, that these had a certain uniform yearly allowance; but we have no evidence to show how far the priory fulfilled its statutory duty of sending regularly a certain quota of students to the universities. We have, again, a large quantity of wine supplied one year for Masses; but, when I wrote and asked the editor whether this amount was typical, he could give no help. Yet it is obviously useless to print the fact that in a certain year wine was supplied for Masses (a fact which everybody must take for granted whether written record exists or not) without any indication of the time for which this particular allowance was calculated to last.

The next largest collection is that by Dean Kitchin of Winchester, printed by the Hampshire Record Society. This is of far greater value. Not only have we complete rolls (either *verbatim* or in full analysis) but the editor deals with all the problems involved, and his preface sketches in detail the management of a great house. The same may be said of the Abingdon rolls, edited by R. E. G. Kirk for the Camden Society; and, on a lesser scale, the two volumes published by the Worcestershire Historical Society. On a smaller scale still, we have valuable material here and there in other collections, as in J. Whitaker's *History of Whalley*, A. Gray's *Priory of St Radegund*, and the Barking account-roll in Dugdale-Caley, I, 442, and several others listed by Professor Eileen Power in her *Medieval English Nunneries*, 697. All these suffer, however, to some extent from the fact that each editor separately is doing pioneer work in his own particular compartment, and none takes a general survey of the whole. This was first attempted by Mr R. H. Snape, and again for the nunneries only, with the advantage of later experience, by Professor Power. Dr H. W. Saunders' study of the Norwich rolls (1930) is valuable, but the accounts are not printed in full. Dr E. A. Bond's prefaces to the three volumes of the *Chronicon de Melsa* (R.S.) are so full and so clear that they are indispensable to any student of the subject. Mr Seiriol Evans is at work on an exhaustive survey of the Ely almoner's rolls: he believes that neither Kitchin nor Kirk have done full justice to the monks in that field, and I am hoping to utilize his researches, with his courteous permission, in my next volume.

A wider field is provided by the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, a sort of Domesday Book compiled for Henry VIII, almost unique in its scope and value. Yet no British scholar has ever attempted to grapple thoroughly with it; and, though the Russian Professor A. Savine's study is admirable in its thoroughness and general accuracy, it necessarily suffers here and there from the author's unfamiliarity with our special conditions (*Oxford Studies in Legal and Social History*, 1).

MONASTIC FINANCE UNDER HENRY VIII

(From Preamble to Statute of 1535.)

"Forasmuch as manifest sin, vicious, carnal, and abominable Living is daily used and committed commonly in such little and small Abbeys, Priories, and other Religious Houses of Monks, Chanons and Nuns, where the Congregation of such Religious persons is under the number of Twelve persons, whereby the Governors of such Religious Houses, and their Covent, spoil, destroy, consume and utterly waste, as well their Churches, Monasteries, Priories, principal Houses, Farms, Granges, Lands, Tenements, and Hereditaments, as the Ornaments of their Churches, and their Goods and Chatells, to the High Displeasure of Almighty God, Slander of good Religion, and to the great Infamy of the King's Highness and the Realm, if Redress should not be had thereof. And albeit that many continual Visitations hath been heretofore had, by the space of two hundred Years and more, for an honest and charitable Reformation of such unthrifty, carnal, and abominable Living, yet nevertheless little or none Amendment is hitherto had, but their vicious Living shamelessly increaseth and augmenteth, and by a cursed Custom so rooted and infected, that a great multitude of the Religious Persons in such small Houses do rather choose to rove abroad in Apostasy, than to conform themselves to the Observation of good Religion; so that without such small Houses be utterly suppressed, and the Religious Persons therein committed to great and honourable Monasteries of Religion in this Realm, where they may be compelled to live religiously, for Reformation of their Lives, there can else be no Redress nor Reformation in that behalf."

CHAPTER XXII

RELIGIOUS AS PARISH PRIESTS

"To Stephen de Patryngton, Carmelite of the English province S.T.P. Dispensation to hold a benefice, with or without cure, accustomed to be served by secular clerks and of any value, and to exchange it as often as he pleases for a similar or dissimilar benefice" (C.P.L. v, 13).

"To the abbot of St Mary's Kalldri, in the diocese of York. Mandate to reserve to Nicholas de Worthyll, Benedictine monk of St Mary's without the walls, York, priest, a benefice with or without cure of souls according to his fitness after the usual examination in Latin, value not exceeding 80 pounds *petits Tournois*, in the common or several gift of the said abbot and convent, and accustomed to be held by monks of the said monastery" (C.P.L. v, 13).

1450. "To Robert Bedall, a canon of the Augustinian monastery of St Mary, Newburgh (*de Novo burgo*), in the diocese of York. Indult, at his recent petition (containing that he has passed his forty-second year, that in the past he often suffered from divers infirmities, on account of which the prior of the above monastery underwent great expenses in order that he might be cured, but can no longer support them on account of the other burdens of the monastery, wherefore he remains destitute of all help) to receive and retain for life *in commendam* any benefice with or without cure, secular or regular of any order, even if a dignity (not in a cathedral church) etc. or a priory (not conventual) etc. . . . To Richard Wolston, a monk of the Benedictine monastery of St Augustine by Canterbury. Indult (the pope having learned that in the said monastery there are several benefices called chantries and perpetual chaplaincies at altars situate therein, under the names of divers saints, the collation etc. of which belongs by ancient custom to the abbot, and which have been and are wont to be assigned to secular clerks) to receive and retain for life one of such chantries or chaplaincies, if collated to him by the abbot" (*C.P.L.* x, 467).

CHAPTER XXIV

ABBOT MARTIN'S DECISION

(H. Pez, *Scriptt. Hist. Aust.* 1743, II, 662.)

"*Juvenis*. How thinkest thou of abbots who resign their office and reserve for themselves a notable sum of money? Can these be excused from the vice of *proprietas*; seeing that they live thenceforward like other secular folk, providing for themselves and spending the money in accordance with their freest pleasure?

Senex. I have long since conferred with learned men on that point, and men of good conscience, especially since such a provision was offered me without petition on my own part. They all said with one accord that it was not safe for an abbot to receive money when he resigns in order to provide for himself in all freedom; for he is a monk, and ought to avoid even the show of *proprietas*. It is safer to receive provision in food and other necessities, for succour and sustentation of their old age or infirmity. If, however, the bishop or the visitors fix money for him, and he hath received it, then he should write down all his expenses and render faithful account of his receipts and expenses: for example, so much for garments, so much for shoes, and so forth. And if he have mis-spent aught, he should do penance and avoid such waste in future, that he may deserve after death to hear that word *Vell done, thou good and faithful servant, etc.*" The book was written in 1464.

PROPRIETARY MONKS

(a) Jouenneaux, 9.

“Many are unable to forego their former crafts or trades; the huckster hath but changed his name indeed, and follows his old trade, no longer for mere food and raiment (as St Paul biddeth), but in pursuit of greater gains than the children of this world. Under the title of Religion, they practise unlawful gains, and the honourable name of Christian doth not so much suffer fraud as lend a cloak to fraud. I blush to say this; yet we must needs thus blush at our own disgrace. We publicly stretch out our hands [for charity]; we hide our gold under rags; and (while all men think otherwise of us) we die as rich men, with well-filled money-bags, after living as beggars. We, who ought wholly to have left everything for Christ’s sake, that naked we might follow our naked Lord, may too often be found to have heaped up riches in our monasteries so busily that in wealth we might compare with Croesus; and a single wealthy monk may challenge the fortunes of many rich worldlings....”

(b) “There is no doubt that, in many monasteries, the rule of poverty was only enforced very slowly, and never in its completeness; we always find a relapse from it. However, we must be on our guard against a generalization here” (*Der Adel u.s.w.* 95. Compare p. 110 for the particular case of St Gall, from the ninth century onward).

(c) Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, Appendix I, 145–6 (John of Ayton).

“The monk may possess no private property, however small it be. But it is yet pleaded against this that the monk is allowed to have a *peculium* because spiritual things profit not without temporal, even as the soul also liveth not without a body. For nature herself confesseth that no spiritual man, even though he be a Friar Minor or a Carthusian, could live long without bodily things, and, thus, could not long profit in spirit; for no man liveth upon air; and in that respect temporal things are necessary to the Church even as the soul is to the body. The solution is this: Let the monk live and profit from the revenues of his monastic endowments; for no monastery should be founded for several persons without sufficient endowment. But the separate monk shall have nothing of his own; and this is what is prohibited here [by the legate Othobon], together with other things of the sort. Among the Mendicants, however, begging supplies the lack of endowments. How it is forbidden to monks to possess private property I have writter above; for the proprietary Religious in his life shall be expelled from the monastery, while in death he shall be buried in the dunghill as a token of his perdition. What then shall we say of a wretched monk utterly destitute of temporal assistance, and perchance so barely clothed as to show his nakedness, who (since charity nowadays groweth cold) hath found no one, within or without, to furnish him with

garments and shoes, beyond one too scanty garment which he hath hitherto been wont to receive, and which perchance is grudgingly and tardily furnished unto him? if such an one, wearied with the winter cold, should thenceforth provide for himself, by keeping something from the overflow or abundance of his livelihood, would he incur these penalties that are pronounced against proprietaries? Joannes Andreae seems to decide that he would. Or say that the Religious may not lawfully retain any pension or money given by his father or any other, earmarked or deputed for the purchase of clothing, even though the abbot himself should consent to such retention, or even though he had a formal public deed to prove it, as is noted there [by Joannes Andreae]. But pity would seem to persuade the contrary: for the Rule is hard on this point, and perchance if St Benedict had looked forward to modern conditions [*juxta moderna prospexisset*] he would not have made it so hard, or at least would have softened it afterwards, since it would be better to have blear-eyed monks than wholly blind; for few are to be found without this vice. My solution is; if the Religious keeps the money knowingly, and thus fraudulently, or against the abbot's will, perchance under the abbot's name, even unto his own death, or at least conceals it from his superior and is not ready to abandon it at his command, then he is said to have the forbidden *peculium*; and such a man is not to be pitied; nay, he shall incur the said penalties. Otherwise, however, if he keep it with the abbot's knowledge, and is ready to disclose it to the abbot as often as it be demanded, and, when called upon, is ready to surrender it effectually (especially if he retain it in the abbot's name and by his express permission) then he is not proprietary. Nor is this contradicted by the words [of Innocent III in Canon Law]: *Nor let the abbot think that he can grant any monk a dispensation for possessing property*: for this is true if we interpret it: *for possessing it in his own name*; but not if we understand *in the name of the abbot or monastery for their [or his] necessary uses*. Note one more point: that in the case where a monk must receive his expenses from the abbey's goods for prosecuting its advantage, it is lawful for him to take the abbey's goods if the abbot will not provide his expenses: that is, if he has no other property; for, if he possess property in fact (though in law he cannot possess it), then he must first of all expend that, and his further expenses should be supplied by the convent.¹ Moreover, I here enter into a very old question: if a man make his Religious profession on condition that he may retain his private property, and if he make use of that property, does his monastic vow hold good? [Six canonists hold that the vow was thus vitiated, and therefore null.] But Accursius draws a distinction; if the condition were made before his vow, then it vitiates that vow; but, if after, then not." Ayton decides that the monk must be bound by that vow in

¹ Here of course, we have that matter which rendered it so difficult to enforce expropriation with any approach to completeness; the fact that the obedientiaries, as business men, had control sometimes of very large sums, and therefore great temptations to peculation.

spite of the unlawful condition with which he accompanied it. "In the profession of Religion faith is promised to God and to man, that is to the abbot or superior. Therefore, even though the superior consent to such a profession, and thus commit sin, yet by that profession the man remaineth bound to God for keeping the Rule, this [illegal] protest [of his] being irrelevant. So it would be in case that, when the bishop ordained me to Holy Orders, I were to say to him as I received them that I had no intention of keeping chastity: although the bishop would be guilty for ordaining me in such a case, yet I should be bound to continence by the obligation which I had made to God" [by receiving Orders].

CHAPTER XXV

(a) PAPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COMMENDAM SYSTEM

The question is of such importance in Church History, and especially in connexion with what might have happened in England if there had been no breach with Rome, that it is worth while to add further evidence, all from the pen of orthodox Roman Catholics.

It is common to represent the French kings as the villains of this piece, and the pontiffs as martyrs. But surely it is more historical, and even more respectful to the papacy, to recognize that the thirty-three popes between 1516 and 1789 were not mere puppets, even if all the French kings had been overwhelming tyrants. The Concordat gave Rome the right of refusing unworthy candidates; why was this right so seldom asserted, and never pressed home? That question was asked plainly enough at the time, though indirectly, by a French Religious of 1674, who dedicated his book to one of the king's chaplains.¹ Louis-François Micault ([1641]-1713) was for some years a Capucin friar, and thence passed into the congregation of Val-des-Choux, which elected him prior. He was a Doctor of Theology; his book was finally suppressed by a decree of the Parlement of Dijon. "The king" (he claims on his title-page) "is just in demanding *commendae*; the pope is holy when he grants them, and the commendatory abbots enjoy them lawfully." The whole of this little book, claiming to defend the system against a too puritanical critic, is an elaborate piece of irony, as bitter as Pascal's and lacking only his supreme literary skill. The author's concluding words are: "If, after all this, the enemy of these gentlemen [the commendatories] is not contented, he has only to bring a suit against St Thomas [Aquinas] and to put the popes who permit the system into the Inquisition."

¹ *Le Véritable Abbé Commendataire*, par le R. P. Louys François de Nuyts, Cap. Prédicateur (Dijon, Grangier. (It was with great difficulty that I procured a copy for the British Museum.) Pressmark C. 38. c. 64).

All the arguments in this little book tend to a *reductio ad absurdum* of the cause which the author is professedly defending. He scouts the idea that these royal nominations take the pope unfairly by surprise (p. 19). He pitilessly emphasizes that long passage in Leo X's preamble, which excuses the new system on the grounds of the wire-pulling, the monopolies, the acts of violence, and the guilt of simony which had so often discredited the ancient system of election by the monks themselves (p. 45, cf. 51). He points out that this usurpation of 1516 is only the crown of a long process by which the original popular election (as in the case of the papacy itself) had been gradually narrowed down to choice by a clique or by a single man (p. 47). At every point, he turns against the papacy itself that obscurity of thought, under apparent precision of language, which had for centuries been characteristic of papal bulls. Thus the side-doors by which popes might have managed retreat are here exploited, with every possible legal quibble, in favour of the king's attack. Against papal absolutism in spiritual matters he arrays the king's absolutism, as "first and universal guardian of the possessions and lives of his subjects" (p. 71). The nobility, also, have their rights: and this system of endowing younger sons tends to the conservation of a class second in importance only to royalty. "This is why we have found the secret of restoring [that class] by endowing its children with abbeys or other commendatory benefices, in order that, when these are provided for, the elder sons may possess the whole family estates, which, not being divided, are enough to keep up the splendour of the family" (p. 75). Why, again, should these commendatories not give liberally to their relations? If the recipient is poor, it is a virtue to relieve his poverty. Even if he be rich, "Doctors [of Divinity] commonly hold that a beneficed prelate who, in his present rank, might lawfully spend 2000 *livres* [a year], may give to his relations 1000 *livres* which he has saved from his table or retrenched from his own comforts: because in that case he is not giving Church goods, but his own property which he has made his own by parsimony" (p. 77). For "it is certain that the prime reason for the *commendam* system was the good of the kingdom, wherein, since the most considerable element, the nobility, daily ruins itself in the public service, we have found means for restoring families by bestowing benefices on some of their progeny, in order to leave sufficient revenues for the eldest son" (p. 78). "I say nothing, because it is notorious, of the fact that the splendour of the Church and the advancement of religion are interested in these *commendae*: the splendour of the Church is concerned that these dignities should be possessed by princes, or by the greatest lords in this mighty realm. It makes for the advancement of the Catholic Apostolic Roman Religion when the nobility, by a fortunate and sound policy, study to inspire their children with faith"—in order that they may qualify for commends! (p. 80).

He then passes on to deal directly with the pope. He quotes the pious words with which Leo X and the Fifth Lateran Council, in the bull proclaiming this Concordat, had reprobated misappropriation of

Church endowments; and here he represents the sour puritanical critic (against whom he professedly argues) as exclaiming "O constancy of the Sovereign Pontiff! O happy resolution of an Ecumenical Council to give no abbeyes or priories *in commendam* at any man's solicitation, whosoever he may be! O unhappy times [of ours]! O corruption of manners, to see that in our days men are to be found who wish to assign such benefices against the will of the pope, intimated and explained and declared in so renowned a Council!" (p. 116). This (our author argues) may impress credulous and ignorant people, who do not take the trouble to read the actual text of Leo's bull. But what does the pope himself say? He leaves, in a few artful words, loopholes which frustrate any such over-strict interpretation. Exceptions, he says, may be made wherever the interests of the church in question demand a ruler of certain qualities, among which the bull specifies nobility of birth, or long-standing connexion with the royal court [*curialitas antiqua*]; "les gens qui ont servy l'Église et l'Estat, et qui agréeront au Pape; c'est le sens naturel des paroles de la Bulle ausquelles il faut s'arrester." Moreover, if our critic had read one page further, he would have seen another vital exception: the otherwise forbidden thing may be permitted "for the conservation of papal authority" (p. 126). Thus the pope himself, in full Council, has "declared that he will permit and institute *commendae* when he himself judges them expedient" (p. 127). Moreover, he who has the right of making Church law has also the right of dispensing from Church laws (p. 131). If he can annul the monk's vow (as we see in Casimir's case), that is, if he can annul the very essence of monasticism, who then can deny him the right to annul what, in comparison, is quite a minor resolution, this prohibition of *commendae*? (pp. 137-43) [with other concrete instances of staggering dispensations]. Again, if the pope can give away vast territories and principalities (as to Simon de Montfort) or the immense possessions of a Religious Order (as those of the Templars), what are we to say to "troublesome folk who make an outcry when the Ecumenical Council of the Lateran puts abbeyes into *commendam* for the profit of a whole Kingdom?" (p. 145). If the pope can turn monks into non-monks (as, for instance, in whole abbeyes like Vézelay, which have been secularized), how can we refuse him that power over mere money which we grant to him over persons? "unless you [the critic] will impiously assert that the pope can dispense with that which regards God, but not with that which concerns men" (p. 149). Moreover, that same preamble to Leo X's bull shows clearly that he did not enter into the Concordat "by tolerance or by constraint, since he himself says that it is by his own consent, by his full choice, and in the plenitude of his power, with his eyes open and his will free, *ex certa scientia*" (p. 153). Again, Gregory XIII approved the system by implication, in 1581, making special arrangements "which show clearly that he considers [commendatory abbots] as members of the clergy and as an illustrious portior of the Church" (p. 154). Martin V, at the Council of Constance, had similarly refrained from touching the system (p. 191). The author ther

praises the regularity of life, of finance, of religious service and of almsgiving among "commended" abbeys, in words which can only have been chosen to provoke the reflexion that all this was the exact opposite of the notorious facts. His last sixteen pages summarize the whole book; and these themselves are resumed in one crucial sentence (p. 234): "The commendatory abbots, named by the King and provided by the Pope, are in excellent conscience, since such is the will of that Living Law which is the Pope."

From this we may pass on to modern writers. Bulliot's brief account of the *commendam* system, in connexion with his own abbey at Autun, can scarcely be bettered as a summary. "We have seen how, in the ninth century, the counts of Autun were abbots [commendatory] of Ste-Colombe at Sens and St-Symphorien at Autun. These *commendae*, granted by the civil power, were modified from Hugues Capet onwards in the sense that kings no longer gave them to actual laymen. Then, towards the mid-twelfth century, under Hadrian IV, came the general use of pontifical *commendae*. Multiplied by Clement V, John XXII, and Clement VI, they became, in the hands of these popes at Avignon, a means of maintaining a court which could no longer draw resources from Italy. Shared turn in turn between popes and kings, in spite of the councils of Bâle and Constance and Trent and Rouen and Reims and Tours, they ended, in virtue of the concordat of 1516, by falling into the absolute power of the kings. Thenceforward the liberty of the clergy, regular and secular, was transferred by law to the throne, which was constituted supreme judge of the interests of abbeys and episcopal sees" (Bulliot, 326).

The rich abbey of St-Germain at Auxerre fell under *commendam* in 1509. In this particular case, protests were raised: "the cardinal of the *Quattuor Coronati*, and another prelate whom the history does not name, raised their voices loudly against this shameful traffic in benefices. Their voices could not be heard in a century when all offices were for sale; and [the abbot elect] got through with only a few days of delay for his bulls... Resignation [in favour of a friend or relative] and *commendam*, those two plagues of monasteries, thenceforward became normal at the abbey of St-Germain... Canon lawyers maintained that popes could grant dispensations for this sort of simony. Thenceforward, people regarded [monastic] benefices as a patrimony which might be given at one's own will. [When this was finally consecrated by the Concordat between Francis I and Leo X] the abbeys fell steadily into decay: such was the case at St-Germain, which also, by its wealth, tempted the greed of the courtiers." "It is possible to rise again from a ruin, or to work one's way out of relaxation; but, when debasement has become a law of the State, then the institution thus treated is doomed to death." "The faithful understood this: the obit-book of the abbey ceased to be crowded with requests for anniversary [Masses]" (Henry, 368-9, 378, 402. For further instances at St-Germain, with papal connivance, see pp. 425 ff.).

Here is a more recent verdict, from a monastic periodical: "In the

fourteenth century, the Avignon popes erected Urban IV's precedent [of imposing their own nominees] into a rule. From Clement V onwards, they interfered directly in abbatial nominations. They put in men who were strangers to the abbey and who were sometimes not even Benedictines; men ignorant of the customs of the monastery and even of the country; men who did not know their own monks, nor whether they themselves would stay in the place until their death, and who thought only of living upon their revenues, or of making them as productive as possible.... It was difficult for abbots who took such liberties with the Rule to show severity on the same point towards the dependent priors and the claustral officers" (Jean Godefroy, in *Revue Mabillon*, xxi (1931), 28-9).

Clement V's responsibility is even more strongly emphasized by the Abbé Ch. Guéry in his history of Lyre (p. 201). He "inaugurated a new system", to indemnify his cardinals for what they lost by leaving Rome for Avignon. He began with smaller houses, like the English alien priories, and then, step by step, to the richest abbeys in France. "Everywhere there was resistance from the monks, outcries from the lords, sons or heirs of the first benefactors; such resistances had to be broken down by interdicts and excommunications, so that the papal *commendae* were at last victorious. Certainly this did not make for the prosperity of the abbeys, but rather for their ruin, material and religious."

In conclusion, here is the full text of the great economic historian D'Avenel: "Officially, we date the confiscation of Church property from the Revolution of 1789; but for the majority of them, spoliation came long before this. It dates from Francis I, and was brought about by his Concordat with Leo X. These two powers, the spiritual and the temporal, gave each other a present which belonged in fact to neither of them.... The pope gave the king a right of nomination to the bishoprics and abbeys, while the king granted the pope a year's revenue (*annate*) of these properties, whether of the secular or regular clergy, at each change of holder: here was a bargain against which the French clergy, caught between two fires, had no chance of successful protest.... The Church was still nominally rich, but its working members were poor. The incomes of those *curés* who did the parish work upon a *portion congrue*, and of the monks who prayed or worked in the cloisters, were perhaps no higher, under Louis XV, than their aggregate in 1900, under the present Republic, before the recent confiscations and suppressions" (*Hist. Économ.* v, 72. The *portion congrue* was a minimum wage fixed by law: but it was not always paid: see p. 116).

(b) THE CHARACTER OF COMMENDATORY ABBOTS

Dubois, one of the most immoral and despicable ministers France has ever had, was commendatory abbot of seven rich houses, with an aggregate revenue of 204,000 *livres*. Even Huguenot lords sometimes received abbeys as the price of political services (Montalembert,

Introd. ch. vii). Two cardinals possessed, between them, four archbishoprics in France, fifteen bishoprics, and sixteen abbeys. "These prelates, gorged with the spoils of the Church, were everywhere except where duty called them. Whereas 11 cardinals, with 40 archbishops or bishops, were at the funeral of Francis I, *one single* French bishop, Claude de la Guiche, bishop of Mirepoix, took part in the deliberations of the Council of Trent. . . . Louis de Brézé, who was bishop of Meaux for 20 years, never resided there. When, in 1607, Richelieu took possession of the See of Luçon, no bishop had appeared there for 60 years; and when Léonard de Trappes made his entry into Auch, it was nearly a century since that diocese had seen an archbishop" (Fr Maumus, quoted by Chaîne, 76). Again, the historian of Grestain, quoting from Montalembert that "*commendam* was the leprosy of the monastic Order", rehearses its effects upon this, which in the great days had been one of the greatest among Norman abbeys. "The list of the abbots of Grestain [from 1481 onwards] gives us two prelates who were titular bishops, and one of whom had a cardinalate; a Knight of Malta who had taken no vows; the son of an ambassador; an epicurean poet whose name is remembered by curious readers; a councillor of the Supreme Court; two canons of Paris; an *abbé* who was an orator, a wit, and an Academician" (*Grestain*, 133).

The seventeenth-century monk who wrote a history of St-Pierre-le-Vif at Sens records how the system came in there (1534): "The abbey fell at last into the jaws of abbots commendatory, who gnawed it so completely that scarce anything was left for the livelihood of the monks. [This abbot] was welcomed with the same ceremonies with which the regular abbots had been received, by degenerate monks who had no will of their own, and who made the same promises" [of obedience and loyalty] (Bouvier, 155).

COMMENDAM AND LITIGATION

(*C.P.L.* ix, 266, A.D. 1442.)

"Pope John—upon the petition of the said abbot and convent of Tintern, containing that Gregory IX, founder of the monastery of St Mary de Gloria of the order of Flora, [in the diocese of] Anagni, now held *in commendam* by Oddo, cardinal deacon of St George's *in Velabro*, granted thereto in perpetuity the [parish] churches of All Saints, Ledde and St Leonard, Magor, in the dioceses of Canterbury and Llandaff; that John XXII—upon its being set forth to him by the said abbot and convent that the fruits etc. of the said churches were diminished and, as far as regarded the utility of the said monastery, almost annihilated—granted them faculty to grant the said churches in farm in perpetuity to the abbot and convent of Tintern; and that the said cardinal, having learned that the said churches were of almost no use to Gloria, with counsel and consent of prior John, subprior Paul and the whole convent of Gloria, and in his own and their names, surrendered the said churches, which are governed by perpetual vicars,

and transferred them to Tintern in perpetuity, and appropriated them thereto—confirms, at the said petition and that of the said cardinal and convent of Gloria, the said surrender, translation and appropriation, so that the said abbot and convent may take possession of and perpetually retain the said churches, and, upon the said perpetual vicarages being void, cause the said churches to be served by monks of Tintern, appointed and removed at the pleasure of the abbot.”

When, in 1379, Clement VII endowed the new Cluniac College of Canon Law at Avignon by annexing to it the revenues of four priories, “the pensions reserved from these benefices by the cardinals who held them *in commendam* were so heavy, that it was necessary to wait until their death until the College could get its effectual share” (*Revue Mabillon*, XVIII (1928), 291).

CHAPTER XXVI

MONASTIC BOOK-KEEPING

“The difficulties which to-day the fragmentary state of the accounts makes insuperable, must have been a great obstacle in the path of an abbot seeking for ways in which waste might be checked and economies effected; while as a further augmentation of the difficulty there must be added, if the suggested interpretation of the functions of the bursar be accepted, the lack of any one channel through which passed all the payments and receipts of the house. The overlapping of duties, the muddling together in one account of all sorts of disconnected items, the lack of any one account which would show roughly at any period of the year the gross receipts and expenditure of the whole establishment must have made it a task of singular difficulty for the most willing of abbots to keep track of the business affairs of the house” (Snape, p. 66).

Let us hear Canon Chapman on the earliest surviving roll at Ely (1292). He writes: “How long a period the accounts of the Sacristy had been annually presented in this same form we know not; but there is reason to believe that considerable reforms in the account-keeping of the Monastery were effected by Bishop Hugh of Balsham.

“After a visitation of the Cathedral in 1261 the Bishop singled out from other matters calling for correction the disordered condition of the finances of the House, and after deliberation with the Prior and the Senior Brethren he promulgated certain rules for their future guidance of a very simple and elementary character. Having himself been a monk and an office-holder in the Ely Monastery before his elevation to the Episcopate, he may have been moved to an official investigation into the finances of his Chapter by his personal experience of the faulty manner in which its business had been carried on in his own time.

"But evidence is also forthcoming that other, if not all, the Benedictine Houses in England were open to the same charge. The two 'Innovations' or 'Reformations' of the Status of the Black Order which were addressed to the Abbots and Priors assembled in London in the years 1238 and 1253 were motivated to a great extent by a knowledge that the financial condition of the Monasteries was being jeopardised, partly indeed by the practice of borrowing money, but more especially by faulty systems of account-keeping.

"The Roll now before us, although thirty years had passed since Bishop Balsham's Visitation and Reform, still bears an aspect of youthfulness and rudeness. Payments of all kinds are entered under the months in which they were made, special purchases being only occasionally grouped together in a section at the close of the quarter. The scribe professes to gather up the figures of each paragraph into a 'summa' or total, leading to a 'summa omnium summarum' at the close of the year, but the arithmetical result is somewhat perplexing as the figures stand in the Roll" (*Sacrist Rolls of Ely*, I (1907), 1).

ACCOUNTANCY IN NORMAN ABBEYS UNDER ODO RIGALDI

Here, again, is the record of a smaller abbey, equally persistent in its neglect of written accounts. Aumâle, with from thirteen to seventeen monks: 1251, "No accounts are given in the convent"—*non computatur in conventu*. 1255, "The abbot gives no account, whether in detail or in gross—*particulariter nec communiter*—in the presence of chosen members of the convent." 1256, "We commanded the abbot to cause the revenues to be committed to writing. *Item*, We enjoined that the obedientiaries, at least once every month, should give account of their receipts and expenses before certain brethren chosen by the convent. *Item*, that the abbot, twice a year at least, should render account of the finances before certain elect from the convent; of which account let two copies always be made, one to remain with the abbot and the other to the elect." In 1260, "We commanded that the revenues of the abbey should be recorded in a little book and read frequently in the presence of the brethren in Chapter." In 1262, "We commanded that the revenues should be recorded in little books."

The complete list of occasions for complaint is as follows: Aumâle, 1251, 1255, 1256, 1260, 1262; Alençon, 1250; Auffay, 1253; Eu, 1250, 1252, 1266, 1268, 1269; Basqueville, 1249, 1253, 1256, 1257, 1261; Bec, 1260; Beaulieu, 1253, 1259, 1264, 1269; Beaumont-le-Roger, 1258; Beaumont (dioc. Lisieux), 1249, 1254; Beaunay, 1254; Bondeville, 1259, 1261; Bival, 1259, 1268; Caen (Maison-Dieu), 1267; Caen (St Étienne), 1250; Caen (Ste-Trinité), 1250; Cherbourg, 1250, 1256, 1266; Chaumont (Maison-Dieu), 1253; Cérisy, 1250; Conches, 1250, 1255; Cormeilles, 1249; Corneville, 1250, 1254, 1267; Croix-St-Leufroy, 1255; Évreux (St-Taurin), 1250; Envermeu, 1248, 1249, 1252, 1264; Lessay, 1250, 1256, 1266; Fontenay, 1250; St-Fromond, 1250,

1256; Gagny, 1259, 1262; Jumièges, 1250, 1254, 1256, 1257, 1262, 1264, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1269; St-Georges-de-Bocherville, 1249, 1250; Gisét, 1250; Grestain, 1249, 1267; Hambye, 1250; St-Imer, 1249; Ivry, 1255, 1258, 1269; Lyre, 1255; Longues, 1277; Marchizy, 1250; St-Martin-en-Warenne, 1259; Montebourg, 1256, 1266; Mont-des-Deux-Amants, 1257, 1259, 1267; Mont-St-Michel, 1256; Mons Morelli, 1250; Montoire, 1250, 1255; Musy, 1250; Neufchâteau, 1257; Ouville, 1248, 1256, 1260, 1265, 1266; St-Pierre-sur-Dive, 1250, 1255, 1260; Planches, 1250; Plessis, 1250; Pontoise, 1268; Pontoise (St-Martin), 1250, 1251, 1257, 1258, 1259, 1269; Pontoise (St-Pierre), 1250, 1259; Préaux, 1257; Préaux (St-Léger), 1249, 1254; Rouen (St-Amand), 1248, 1251, 1254, 1258, 1262, 1264, 1267; Rouen (St-Ouen), 1249, 1254, 1256, 1259, 1264, 1265, 1266, 1268; Rouen (Aula Puellarum), 1248, 1250; Rouen (St-Lô), 1250, 1253, 1254, 1260; Rouen (Madeleine), 1254, 1258; Rouen (Mont Ste-Catherine), 1248, 1250, 1254, 1255, 1256, 1260, 1269; Serqueux, 1260; St-Sauveur-d'Évreux, 1250, 1255, 1258; Serans, 1258; St-Sever, 1256; St-Saens, 1249, 1252, 1253, 1259, 1262; Torcy, 1250; Tréport, 1255, 1256; St-Victor-en-Calais, 1251, 1252, 1253, 1257, 1258, 1263, 1267; St-Vigor, 1250, 1267; Villarceaux, 1249, 1253, 1254, 1268; Walemont, 1255, 1259, 1260, 1265, 1266, 1268; St-Wandrille, 1251, 1255, 1258, 1259, 1262; Vauville, 1250, 1256.

LINCOLN VISITATIONS

At all the following houses the visitors report either failure to render due account or financial irregularity: Bardney, [1420] and 1440; Bourne, 1422; Breedon, 1440; Caldwell, 1421; Canons Ashby, 1432 and 1442; Catesby, 1442; Croyland, 1434; Daventry, 1432 and 1442; Delapré, 1432; Dorchester, 1441; Dunstable, 1442; Elston, 1421 and 1432; Eynsham, 1432; Harrold, 1442; Heynings, 1440; Humberstone, 1440; Huntingdon, 1421 and 1439; Langley, 1440; Laund, 1440; Leicester, 1440; Markby, 1438; Markyate, 1442; Missenden, 1433; Newnham, [1420] and 1442; Nutley, 1447; St Frideswide's Oxford, 1422 and 1445; Peterborough, 1432, 1437, 1447; Ramsey, 1432 and 1439; Spalding, 1438; St Neot's, 1432 and 1439; Stamford (St Michael), 1440; Studely, 1445; Thornton, 1422.

THE NORWICH VISITATIONS

[The numbers in brackets refer not to fresh cases, but to repetitions.]

(A) *Accounts not rendered*, pp. 14, 16, 22, 26, 32, 39, 50, 54, 56, 58, 73, 74, 75, [78], 88, 98, 102, [103, 104], 108, 111, 121, 124, 125, 126, 138, [139], 143, 161, 165, [167], 173, 174, 175, 176, 180, 184, 185, 190, 199, 201, 203, [205], 211, 217, [218], 220, 243, 249, 251, [252], 261, 265, 271, 280, 286, 293, 313, [314]—total, 50.

(B) *Embezzlement or similar irregularities*, pp. 3, 10, 46, 60, [61], 74, [75, 78], 88, 102, 111, 114, [115, 119], 137, 165, [166, 167], 175, 184, 203, 222, 248, 266, [268, 269], 295—total, 16.

(C) *No proper inventory*, pp. 16, 19, 129, 131, 134, 140, 148, 167, 173, 175, 192, 291—total, 12.

There are fifteen cases of accounts rendered rightly, or at least not complained of: Norwich Priory,¹ Carnary,¹ St Mary, Coxford, Pentney, Ipswich, Campsey, Snape, Eye, Stoke, Ixworth, Mettingham, Wingfield, Beeston,² Weybourne.

There are thirteen cases of "no accounts to Brethren" or "no accounts shown": Norman's Hospital; Carrow;³ [Wymondham, p. 21 shown; but p. 22 not done for many years]; Bokenham; [Hickling to bishop, but not to the brethren]; Thetford; Thetford nunnery; Attleboro; [St Olave's to bishop but not to brethren]; Flixton; Waxham to bishop but not to brethren;⁴ the same at Butley and Walsingham.

There are seven doubtful cases: St Giles (master absent); St Faith's, *titulum non exhibuit, compotumque ostendit* [no inventory of jewels here, p. 18]; Ingham, the same phrase; Thompson; Ipswich St Peter; Bungay [p. 41, possibly erased by scribe]; Sudbury, the same.

ARCHBISHOP WARHAM'S VISITATION

At Faversham, "Robert Bendisshe and John Hartey do not give in their memoritoria as religious men should, but they make up a book, and this is accepted as an acquittance of their returns." At St Gregory, Canterbury, "The subprior says further that the prior does not give the items of his account to the brethren, it is a general and not a special account. If the brethren may not inspect the account they do not know the state of the priory. William Dover, Edmund Faversham, sacrist, and William Tailor, precentor, agree with the subprior about the accounts. John Cambridge says the prior will not give the account in writing, but only verbally." At Leeds, "The prior does not make his account annually...the prior's accounts do not give details." At Sheppey, "The prioress does not give any accounts. Indeed she [Agnes Norton, subprioress,] has never heard of any account being given." At Cumbwell, "A memorandum is made, that the prior never accounts for the state of the said priory in the presence of his brethren."

ANGLO-PREMONSTRATENSIAN FINANCE

At Dale, the abbot had illegally lent certain "peculia" to a neighbouring gentleman (11, 180). The abbot of Eggleston was warned; "let him not presume to give long leases of the abbey's tenements, or without consent of his brethren to alienate or mortgage, or in any way pledge. By reason of the shortness of time, we could not sufficiently

¹ But in these two there was embezzlement.

² But predecessor had *never* given account.

³ No inventory of property.

⁴ But apparent embezzlement: see p. 50.

grasp, for the present, the true reckoning or state of the monastery; therefore we commanded that he should send it to me or at least to one of my household within 14 days" (II, 222). At Hagneby, the cellarer was commanded to make up a "sound compotus" and get it audited within four days and send it to the bishop, under pain of contempt; thenceforward he was to render accounts regularly thrice a year (II, 233). Three years later, the bishop is compelled to repeat the same injunction (II, 235). At Langley, the abbot was of such ill fame for incontinence and waste of conventual property that the bishop committed the finances to two of the brethren (III, 18). Twelve years later, one of these two has himself become abbot, and there is "very grievous ill report of him, both for incontinence and for dilapidation of abbey goods, spread through the neighbourhood". The bishop's strict examination of the brethren led him to acquit the abbot, but he bound him under pain of deposition, and the brethren under pain of excommunication, not to violate that chapter of the Rule which forbids illegal sales, leases, or pawning of conventual property (III, 25). At Lavenden, the common seal was loosely kept (III, 36). At Newbo, the warning against illegal sales, etc., under the same penalties, was given still more emphatically than at Langley (III, 59). At Torre, "We commanded that all the obedientiaries should render account faithfully at least once a year, without deceit and dissimulation, of the goods of the monastery, both receipts and expenses, in presence of the abbot or his definite deputy, under pain of major excommunication and banishment to most distant monasteries, not to return for three years at least" (III, 144). The last case (Welbeck, III, 184) is dealt with fully in my text.

CHAPTER XXVII

A SPENDTHRIFT ABBOT'S FATE

Abbot Bower, in his continuation of Fordun's *Scottish Chronicle* (II, 12), tells under the year 1212 the story of Adam of Kendal, Cistercian abbot of Holme Cultram. He was ambitious, and coveted the see of Carlisle, whose bishop was already old and infirm. Therefore he squandered the abbey goods, which had been given in trust for the poor, upon rich banquets to influential clerics and layfolk of the diocese, with many extravagant gifts taken "from the patrimony of the Crucified One". This led to such decay, both spiritual and temporal, at Holme Cultram, and the immediate authorities winked so steadily at this, that the King of Scotland and other layfolk appealed to the General Chapter at Cîteaux. A visitation was ordered; the truth transpired, and Adam was deposed together with the cellarer who had been his tool in all this dilapidation. By way of indulgence

to the deposed abbot, though against the rules of the Order, he was allowed to retire to a comfortable mansion and chapelry in the forest of Inglewood, "very pleasant and retired", with a monk named Ralph for his companion. Presently the bishop died, and Adam's hopes, raised for one moment, were dashed to the ground by the news which his secret messenger brought him, that his name had not even been put forward as candidate. In this utter depression he besought Ralph to say the seven penitential psalms on his behalf, daily for a fortnight, in order that God might reveal to Adam his future state. Ralph consented not without trepidation: in fact, night after night he saw his master wandering hopelessly in a horrid desert of thorns and brambles, from which no outlet seemed possible. He came and reported this: but Adam, he found, had seen a more detailed vision, which he proceeded to relate. "A man had come into his sleep and bidden him authoritatively to follow: presently they found themselves in a palace 'where sat the most blessed Virgin of Virgins with a multitude in her train'. She said: 'Wouldst thou see thine own state? Go then into this house hard by, and thou shalt find a guide who will show thee thy state.' So I entered by the door that she showed me, and found a house most ample in its circumference, and filled in the midst, on all sides, with monks of divers Orders. These men all sat with lowered cowls, so that their faces were altogether veiled, and no man might know them. So I went back to the Mother of Mercy; and she bade me go round the whole house again and seek diligently. When I had done this, and all sat motionless, and I could see no man's face, then on my return the glorious Lady commanded me to go round the said house yet a third time, and without doubt I should find. So I followed her bidding in all obedience, and scanned them as she had told me: when one arose and threw back his cowl and showed his face and looked upon me. Then I knew him, and said: 'Art thou Dan Thomas, who wast once my cellarer?' Then he made answer: 'I am that miserable Thomas.' 'How, then, is it with thee?' 'Ill, immeasurably ill, and far worse by reason of thyself. But I know what thou seekest, and what thou desirest: for the blessed Virgin Mary hath commanded me to show thee thine own state: come therefore and follow me.' Then he brought me into a house, wondrous great and fair, with tables adorned everywhere after the manner of a refectory, loaded with the choicest viands, wherefrom a delicious odour breathed around, and refreshed my nostrils so wondrously that methought I could have lived for ever on the fragrance of all that sweetness without further taste of the meats. Whereat I was delighted beyond measure, and asked of him what this house might be, and for whose use it was so splendidly ordained. 'This', said he 'is the refectory of simple monks and poor lay-brethren who, bearing patiently and perseveringly the yoke of inward discipline and outward obedience, do now receive daily and inestimable consolations in this place.' When therefore I would have tarried a little and refreshed myself with all this sweetness, my guide would not suffer it, saying that I had neither part nor lot

in that house. Then he led me forthwith to another house, of vast size and most filthy, wherein I saw tables strewn everywhere with foulest meats in the greatest abundance; dishes full of the flesh of horribly stinking corpses, so that I could not bear them even holding my nose. When I asked him what this house might be, he answered: 'This is the refectory of the cellarers', that is, prepared for himself and those companions whom I had seen sitting in his company a little while before, with cowls drawn down and veiled faces, and for others like them who, for the sake of pleas in the lawcourts, were wont to haunt the courts of kings and nobles. And, because they had neglected the poverty of their brethren and of claustral life, spending their time in gluttony and drunkenness, palliating the vice of their own pleasure under the occasion of necessary business and of the profit of the community, therefore it is exacted from them by daily torments that they should daily fill their bellies with such meats as this. 'But', said he, 'come further and I will show thee that which remaineth.' Then we entered into a third house, of very great size, but subterraneous like a crypt or cellar. Then said he to me: 'Mark diligently all that thou seest, and hold all fast in thy memory.' So I looked and saw, under the vaulted roof, such flesh as we call *bacons* in the vulgar tongue, hanging in densest rows. All of these were burning fiercely with most horrible sulphurous fire, so that the fat rained down in showers. Now, under these flitches, were graves dug in the earthen floor of that vault, of measure and capacity for a man's body; and in these graves lay men on their backs, all swallowing with detestable avidity this sulphurous fat that rained down upon them. Then in great amazement and trembling I asked what this house might be. 'This', said he, 'is the assembly-hall made ready for those abbots who loved to dwell apart in their own chambers, who studied to eat fat things and to drink deep: therefore do they now receive their worthy reward in torments, for that, when they were in power, they sought the delights of the flesh against God's will.' Then I asked him whether, when I died I should come to this place of torment. 'Yea,' said he, 'know without doubt that thy vacant place awaiteth thee here until thou come to die. Therewith he showed me my grave empty, and the flitches hanging over it; and he added: 'Lo, thou hast seen thy state by sure revelation. But we must return by the way that we went to the glorious Mother of Mercy.'" She told Adam that he would die on Ascension Day, and must live this intervening space in such penitence and mortification as to earn some abatement of these pains. But he, coming to himself could not be convinced but that he was irretrievably damned; under this haunting conviction, he became raving mad, and they had to chain him in his abbey. On Ascension Day, while his friend Ralph was singing Mass and all the brethren and servants were busy, Adam escaped, rushed into the church, and cast his arms round the celebrant with "Help, have mercy upon me!" They tore him away with difficulty and gave him over to the servants, in whose hands he expired before the Ascension Day Mass was ended. All this (adds the author

is recorded here as an example to prelates, that they may take warning from Adam of Kendal.

THE DEMON ABBOT OF OSSIACH

(H. Pez, *Scriptt. Rer. Aust.* 1743, II, 643.)

Abbot Martin of Vienna, writing in 1464, is recounting his visitation, as papal commissary, of the Austrian Benedictine houses in [1450]. When he comes to Ossiach, the pupil interrupts him:

Juvenis. . . . I beg you: there is a common report in that region that in the monastery of Ossiach there is a demon enclosed: some say in a glass and others in a crystal. Tell me, what didst thou learn there?

Senex. We purposely made enquiry there concerning that report, and the brethren denied all points. Yet I heard on vague report that, long since, a certain abbot passed from this house to the Roman Court, and a demon in his form came, as though it were the returned abbot, and perverted the brethren. He sold the chalices and bells, and granted to each brother a procuress, until the true abbot came back; then that demon vanished, and the other had much indeed to reform. Thence arose the proverb 'Beware of the devil in Ossiach.' Yet I say this not by way of assertion: only, as aforesaid, I relate by opinion that which hath been told to me."

CHAPTER XXVIII

MONASTIC DEPOPULATION

(Hugh of St-Cher, on Lamentations i, 1 (*Opera*, IV, 284).)

How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow, the princes of provinces made tributary! He comments: "*That was full of people* in the past. For, where were a hundred monks aforetime, there are in these days scarce a score. Or [we may interpret] *full of people*, to wit, of folk that are like unto the people, and unlearned [*idiotis*], who are not esteemed as men. And therefore even if there be many such, yet is the city solitary; for there is no unity but schism and discord, for they are evil. *How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow!* Of old, Religion was mistress of princes and kings, and, literally, of the Gentiles; for she frequently recalled them from their wickedness by her miracles examples of St Martin and St Gregory the Great]. And therefore afterwards many [Religious], puffed up with pride although they wrought no miracles, sought and obtained exemptions; whence such a monastery is become as a widow. And truly saith he *as*; for it is subject not to the bishop, but perchance in great part to the devil: whence it is not *truly* widowed; for its exemption is to the brethren

for an occasion of sin, and a cloak of iniquity, as it is written [I Peter ii, 16] *not making liberty a cloak for malice*. This again is what we may read figuratively in Genesis xxxviii, that Tamar, being a widow, took the garments of a harlot. Whence also it cometh to pass that this *prince of the provinces*, to wit, Religion, because she is unwilling to be judged or defended by the bishops, is defended by money and is servant unto the knights as it were as a tributary, and to many folk that exact from her." A few verses later, he proceeds: "*Her persecutors have taken her in the midst of straits*. This is allegorically expounded of the Church; for she, having gone forth from her first liberty (that is, from poverty) hath come into servitude to the Gentiles [*gentes*] and into the affliction of vices, when she began to multiply her temporal goods. Hence there are many Gentiles [*gentes*] nowadays in the Church, that is, many who live after the manner of Gentiles, who give her no rest; as it is written in the Psalm *O God, the heathen are come into thy inheritance; they have defiled thy holy temple!*"

CHAPTER XXIX

PAPAL MONEYLENDERS

("The Denarius St Petri in England", by O. Jensen (*Trans. R. Hist. Soc.* N.S. xix (1905), 233 ff.).)

"As a rule, money was raised for the Roman Church for many purposes at the same time: for instance, tallage for crusades, tithes, feudal fines, Peter's pence, etc... Though from the point of view of the Curia the system was beneficial, from other standpoints it had great disadvantages, and of a kind which increased as time went on. Gradually it developed into a commercial system through Western Christendom. A number of the most trusted and loyal supporters of the Papacy became moneylenders. For instance, when Berthold of Regensburg denounced the Papacy for trading in indulgences and the like, the justice of his accusation was proved by a host of examples, especially from the ranks of the Papal collectors.

"The system was open to abuse, not only in the fact that the chief collectors were usually foreigners armed with extraordinary powers, but also in the method of their payment. Their fixed salary from the Curia was very small... It may seem strange that in the face of all these drawbacks anyone was willing to serve as collector, though as a matter of fact the office was much sought after. This was partly on account of the dignity of the office and partly on account of the opportunities it afforded of obtaining money in other ways. The collector often received large gifts, and moreover after he had carried out the business of his office for some years in a manner satisfactory to the Curia, he was certain to obtain a rich benefice or ecclesiastical office."

CHAPTER XXX

A COMPLICATED CONTRACT

Cal. Close Rolls, Ed. III, 1349-54 (1351 [Mond. after St Dunstan; 25 Ed. III]).

P. 364. "Enrolment of deed testifying that William bishop of Winchester and brother John, prior of the cathedral church of St Swithun, Winchester, are bound by this deed to Master Gilbert de Bruera, dean of St Paul's church, London, in 60*l.* to be paid to him or his attorney in St Paul's church as follows, to wit at Martinmas next 30*l.* and at the Purification following 30*l.* without any further delay. Dated at London on Sunday after St Dunstan, 25 Edward III.

"*Memorandum* that the said bishop and prior came into chancery at London on 23 May and acknowledged the preceding deed.

"Enrolment of deed testifying that although William bishop of Winchester and brother John, prior of the cathedral church of St Swithun, Winchester, are bound to Gilbert de Bruera, dean of St Paul's church, London, in 60*l.* by the preceding bond, Gilbert grants that during his lifetime the 60*l.* shall not be sought of the bishop and prior and they shall not be bound to pay it; he also grants that if he die before the Annunciation in any year, then nothing of the 60*l.* shall be paid to his executors, but the bishop and prior shall be quit of their bond, but if he die after the Annunciation and before Michaelmas, then he grants that if the bishop and prior pay 50 marks to the executors at the terms aforesaid in the said church, then the bond shall be null. Dated at Suthwerk on Monday after St Dunstan, 25 Edward III.

"*Memorandum* that the said bishop and prior came into chancery at London on 23 May, and acknowledged the preceding indenture."

Whether we interpret this mysterious document as one of the many contractual devices for concealing the fact of usury, or as a provision for meeting such contingencies of death as are calculated for by modern annuity and insurance companies, or even as a light-hearted wager between the two contracting parties, it will be seen that the affair is one which might easily have given rise to further litigation.

DIVORCE FOR MONEY

Extract from my review of Mr Belloc's *History of England*, vol. II, in *The Nation and Athenaeum* for April 30, 1927.

"Let us take one striking example [of Mr Belloc's frequent inaccuracy]. He writes, on page 22, 'Divorce was an idea abhorrent.' In the sense in which an ordinary reader would take these words, they are very far from the truth. So common was the *fact* of divorce in the Middle Ages, under different pretexts, that even the greatest canon

lawyers may be found using the *word* itself, as a matter of course. Bishop Jonas of Orléans [960] complained that 'many' folk put away their wives when weary of them. St Anselm [1100] mourns to hear that, in Ireland, men exchange wives 'as publicly and freely as horses'. Petrus Cantor, one of the glories of the University of Paris [1190], writes, 'for money's sake, at our own choice, we [clergy] join or separate whom we will'. The still greater Ivo of Chartres [1110] had complained that such abuses turned the sacrament of matrimony into a laughing-stock for the lay-folk. The Dominican Bromyard [1380] describes the abuses in detail, and sums up, 'nowadays, when a wife displeases, or another woman is coveted, then a divorce is procured'—*divortium procuratur*. The contemporary poem of 'Piers Plowman' tells the same tale; a man may get rid of his wife by giving the judge a fur cloak; Church lawyers 'make and unmake matrimony for money'. Erasmus writes emphatically on this subject of 'so many unhappy divorces'; he thinks it would be better if the State took this matter away from the Church and guaranteed marriage as securely as other contracts." Although Mr Belloc protested strongly against this review, he made no attempt to deny or to explain away this documentary evidence. A Roman Catholic correspondent who wrote to support him fell ignominiously into heresy, by denying one of the most important canons of the Council of Trent, which he had evidently never heard of.

OFFICIAL CORRUPTION

For the extent to which judicial bribery was rooted in French society under the Ancien Régime, see D'Avenel, *Hist. Écon.* v, 105. For regular bribing of king's officers see J. E. T. Rogers, *Hist. Ag. and Prices*, II, under the years 1312, 1314, 1334, 1341, 1344-7, 1350, etc. For civic bribery see *Coventry Leet Book*, II, 293, 303 (E.E.T.S. 135). Other cases may be found in E. A. Freeman, *Exeter*, 159 (chancellor, etc. as matter of course); Luchaire, *Innocent III Albigeois*, 22; B. Monod, *Guibert*, 120, 124, 126, 129, 147, 148, 154, 178; *Paston Letters*, Introd. 39; Traill, *Social England*, 2nd ed. II, 535; Matt. Paris, *Chron. Maj.* R.S. II, 163, 425, 432, 463; III, 99, 248, 260, 306, 448; Busch (to archdeacon) 451, (to bishops) 541, (to confessors) 338, (nuns to confessor) 581; Pirenne, *Hist. Belg.* II, 358; Lea, *Sac. Cel.* II, 14.

CHAPTER XXXII

(a) CLUNIAN STATISTICS

Numbers in [1410] compared with the [bracketed] statutory numbers (the sign + = *more than*): Cluny, 200 or less [260]; Charlieu, 26 [32]; Gigny, 25 [32]; Vergy, 20 [28]; Ambert, 18 [20]; Lusy, 2 [4]; Bermondsey, 25 [30+]; Wenlock, 40 [40+]; Arenthon, 25 [30]; Ile d'Aix,

13 [16]; Mozac, 40 [50]; Moyrac, 4 [4+]; Romainmotier, 22 [22+]; Pontidoc, 24 [30]; Signa, 3 [3+]; St Isidoro (dioc. Palencia), 13 [30]; Valvede, 3 [4]; St Vincent, 8 [12]; Lewes, 26 [50]; Castleacre, 26 [30+]; Bromholm, 16 [19].

Nuns. Marcigny, 50 [99]; Sales, reduced to 30; Gayon by Huy, 25 [30+]; Canturio, 40 [80+]; Cannobio, 10 [10+].

(b) STATISTICS FROM ODO RIGALDI

Monasteries, where two figures are compared. The numbers in 1248-69 compared with the [bracketed] statutory numbers: 2 [3], 3 [5], 3 [6], 3 [6], 3 [6], 4 [6], 6 [7], 6 [8], 8 [12], 9 [13], 15 [35], 16 [25], 18 [25], 23 [30], 39 [40]—total 158 [227].

STATISTICAL TABLE OF MONASTIC POPULATION (naturally very incomplete)

Arranged according to half-centuries, each of which *ends* with the date at the top of the column.

The scattered sources from which these are collected will be found in my MS. notes transferred to Chicago University Library. Meanwhile the following indications should be noted:

* These, being the numbers at the actual moment of Dissolution, must be taken with a certain allowance: some monks had slipped off while the blow was impending.

† These are certainly before the Black Death, and probably about the date here indicated.

‡ These are certainly not later than the date here indicated, and probably not much earlier.

× These are not later than about 1410.

? These are traditional figures, reported approximately by chroniclers or visitors.

?? Traditions of greater antiquity.

+ The figure is reported with the addition "and more".

§ Reduced at this date from a greater previous number, unspecified.

|| At this date the house was suppressed or secularized.

English Houses

	1098	1148	1198	1248	1298	1348	1398	1448	1498	1548	1598	1648	1698	1748	1792
Durham			From 150? down to 56					32 61	—	43	—	—	—	—	—
Abingdon	50 32 150??	80	—	—	—	—	—	49	—	25*	—	—	—	—	—
Canterbury, Christ Church St Augustine	—	—	—	—	About 45	—	46	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rochester	20	60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19*	—	—	—	—	—
Winchester	—	—	—	—	—	64	—	—	—	35*	—	—	—	—	—
Westminster	80	—	—	—	80?	—	—	—	—	46	—	—	—	—	—
Peterborough	—	60 or 72?	—	80	—	—	—	64 or 44?	—	41 39*	—	—	—	—	—
Ely	70	—	—	—	—	49	28	32	—	37 24*	—	—	—	—	—
Gloucester St Peter	—	100 +	—	—	—	53	54	—	50 41	14* [22]	—	—	—	—	—
Worcester	—	—	—	—	—	—	34	45	—	17	—	—	—	—	—
Croxden	—	—	50	—	—	30†	—	38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Evesham	36 67	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tewkesbury Croyland	—	67	—	—	—	41	—	73	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

St Albans	—	—	100?	—	—	—	58	54	48	54	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bath	—	—	—	—	—	31 15?	56 53 16	20	46 52	21 17 22 17*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Milton Abbot	40 12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15 or 16?	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Michelney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	18	11*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Chester, St Werburgh Cathedral	—	—	30?	—	40 ¹	—	24 26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pershore	—	—	—	17 or 18?	—	—	—	—	—	21* or 15 21*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tavistock	—	—	—	—	—	—	13 15 12	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Selby	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13	25	24*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northampton	—	—	—	30	34	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wenlock	—	—	—	40	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thetford	—	13	—	24	34 35 22	—	—	—	—	14*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Monks Horton	—	—	—	12	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Farley	—	—	—	18	18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Linton	—	—	—	27	22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bermondsey	—	—	—	20	25 32 18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

¹ After recent increase.

English Houses (cont.)

[illegible]

English Numeries (cont.)

	1098	1148	1198	1248	1298	1348	1398	1448	1498	1548	1598	1648	1698	1748	1792
Sopwell	—	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9*	—	—	—	—	—
Malling	—	—	—	—	—	8	—	—	—	12*	—	—	—	—	—
Monkton	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Henwood	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	—	5* or 6	—	—	—	—	—
Studley	—	—	—	—	50	—	—	—	—	8*	—	—	—	—	—
Bungay	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	12*	—	—	—	—	—
Wilberfosse	—	—	—	—	—	20	—	—	—	or 7	—	—	—	—	—
Godstowe	—	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13*	—	—	—	—	—
Littlechurch	—	—	—	—	—	10 or 12	—	—	—	19	—	—	—	—	—
Kingston St Michael	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	5	—	—	—	—	—
Polslo	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3*	—	—	—	—	—
Ickleton	—	—	—	—	—	17	—	—	13	4* + 1?	7	—	—	—	—
Swaffham Bulbeck	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	8	17*	—	—	—	—	—
Thetford	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newcastle, St Bar-	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	9*	—	—	—	—	—
tholomew	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	—	—
Grimsby	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9*	—	—	—	—	—
Hampole	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8 or 9	—	—	—	—	—
Nuncoton	—	—	14 or 15	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	—	—	—	—
	—	—	—	—	0+	—	—	—	—	19*	—	—	—	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13*	—	—	—	—	—

¹ Not enough to elect abbes.

French and German Houses

	1098	1148	1198	1248	1298	1348	1398	1448	1498	1548	1598	1648	1698	1748	1792
Fontevraud	—	3000? 4000? 200?	—	—	360 300	—	500	—	—	100	—	—	—	—	—
Reggio	—	—	80? 90	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grestain	—	—	40	—	32	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	1
Aurillac	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	o	—	—	—	—
Acey	—	—	—	30 40	—	—	—	6	11	9	—	8	—	—	—
Marnans	—	—	—	—	12	—	—	—	6	6—	—	—	—	—	—
Saulve Réal	—	—	13	—	—	—	—	—	9	10	—	—	—	—	—
Bonnevaux	—	—	—	—	31	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	—
Auxerre (St G.)	—	—	—	50	—	—	—	—	—	36	19—	—	—	—	—
Prüm	186	—	—	—	—	—	16	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St Maximin	70	—	—	—	—	—	25	7	—	27	—	—	—	—	—
Echternach	40	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
St-Denis ¹	150	49	—	—	—	—	—	13	—	70	—	52 ²	—	—	—
Caunes	—	—	—	15 19	26+ —	26	—	15+	—	8	—	—	15 16	—	7
Sens	—	—	—	—	—	—	22	—	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Autun	—	—	—	—	—	30† 60	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
Himmerode	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Laon (St-Vincent)	30 40	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15—	—	—	—	—	—

¹ In 1137 the numbers appear to have been only 49 (Félibien, *Hist. de St-Denis*, 168). But in 832 the numbers had been fixed at 150 (*ibid.* 72).

² After a reformation by pope and king in concert (1633) of which the explicit cause was "that the observance of the Rule is notoriously and notably relaxed there, and almost utterly extinct.... In this abbey there was none who had ever kept the Rule" (Félibien, *Preuves*, p. cxlii).

French and German Houses (cont.)

[illegible]

The following are Cluniac from the General Chapter records

[illegible]

[illegible]

¹ *Révue bénédictine*, XXXV (1923), 174.

² Marrier, *Bib. Chun.* 593, gives 460 in [1130], but without conclusive evidence.

These Cluniac numbers are taken from Bruel and Duckett. For the thirteenth century or earlier there are 42 houses of 5 or less than 5; 11 of 6-10; 26 of 11-15; 12 of 12-20; 26 of 21-25; 8 of 26-30; 2 of 36; 8 of 40; 1 of 41; 1 of 60; 2 of 80; 1 of 111; 1 of 200. This gives 141 houses with a total number of 2550, the average per house being about 18.

For the fourteenth century the records supply 2 houses of 0; 3 of 2; 4 of 3; 2 of 4; 1 of 5; 1 of 14; 1 of 20; 1 of 24; 1 of 29; 2 of 40; 1 of 48; 1 of 80; given by Bruel. This gives 20 houses with a total of 326, which gives an average of nearly 22 per house. But this higher average is entirely due to the omission of so many smaller houses from the second list.

The figures for 1792 are from A. Peigné-Delacourt, *Tableau des Abbayes, etc.* Arras, 1875.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CASTLEACRE CASE

(*C.P.L.* VI, 78, A.D. 1405.)

"To the prior of Westacre in the diocese of Norwich. Mandate, at the recent petition of Simon, Cluniac, prior of St Mary's, Castelacre, in the same diocese—containing that upon his obtaining the priory the late Richard earl of Arundel, asserting himself to be its patron, exacted from him an oath not to alienate its woods, corrodies or other possessions, nor manumit its serfs without licence or consent of the said earl and his successors; and adding that he fears lest prejudice may in consequence arise to himself and his successors and to the priory—seeing that to laymen has been assigned no power over persons and things ecclesiastical; after imposing on Simon a salutary penance for his incautious oath, to declare him not to be bound to observe it, and his successors not to be bound to take a like oath to the said earl's successors; notwithstanding any custom, which should rather be called an abuse (*corruptela*), to the contrary, and saving Simon's oath to his superior about alienations."

CHAPTER XXXIV

(*Abingdon Chronicle* R. S. I, 287.)

Et tempore obiit Anselmus archiepiscopus; tunc electus est Faricius ad archiepiscopatum, sed episcopus Lincolniensis et episcopus Salesburiensis obstiterunt, dicentes non debere archiepiscopum urinas mulierum inspicere.

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Note 1. M. = Monks or Monastic.

Note 2. The footnotes are not indexed, nor any part of the Appendixes beyond the headings. It is hoped that all geographical names will be found here. Names of obscure persons are omitted when they have no special significance. On p. 303, for instance, William has not been indexed, though his village of Atton has.

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